

Ideas, Peoples and Inclusive Education in India



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Social Pedagogy, Civil Society and Consciousness-raising praxis: Models and Conceptualisation

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Abstract

This paper discusses social pedagogy in the contexts of civil society through models and conceptualisations and specifically through the lens of consciousness-raising praxis. Two styles are prominent collective and reflexive, each with their own peculiarities. Further, this paper exhorts for a hybrid approach and model of social pedagogy, specifically when it comes to consciousness-raising praxis. Social milieus geared towards consciousness-raising praxis are structurally hybrids in several dimensions. Hybridity is their essential characteristic, and it fulfils an indispensable role. On the basis of a reconstruction of the essential components of pedagogy, a generic structure of social pedagogy is proposed which in turn is founded upon an enterprise ontology. It emphasizes the pedagogic nature of such ventures in the sense of real causation. Through various combinations of the components (among which are the mission, target population, and markets), types of practice models can be distinguished. At an emergent functional level, these design configurations allow for a typological distinction between various types of strategy. The proposed design framework allows for a categorization of social enterprises and thus for explaining organizational pluralism while being founded on real distinctions in the social world rather than merely conceptual abstraction.

Introduction

This paper assumes that the essence of pedagogy lies in the design of effective practice models of social milieus (Casadesus-Masanell & Ricart 2007; Brouard & Larivet 2011). In reconstructing what is essential in social pedagogy, resorting to a design approach seems opportune. The idea is to develop a model that ties social milieus to structural and objective factors of social reality. This paper discusses the collective and reflexive styles of pedagogy. Further, the paper details hybridity as a hallmark of social milieus focused on consciousness-raising praxis in the civil society context. A generic practice model of a social enterprise is subsequently proposed. Instead of developing a precise enterprise ontology, design thinking approach used is less formalistic leading to a typology of social enterprise. The approach taken derives from an applied ontology. It is meant to arrive at a number of successful practice models for a social enterprise that is able to support its mission of extending values germane to civil society and consciousness-raising praxis to the spheres of markets and of the state.

Collective and Reflexive Styles of Pedagogy

Depending on the type of social-structural embeddedness of pedagogues, a radically different meaning and pattern of involvement can be discerned. Further pedagogue involvement should be qualified as a biographically embedded reality in terms of two levels structural-behavioural and motivational-attitudinal. These two analytical levels consequently refer to the structural and individual reflexivity in late modern life- emerging thereby as collective and reflexive styles of pedagogy (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

Eckstein (2001) relates collective pedagogy to community and class homogeneity with a low residential turnover and with shared

needs and wants. In other words, she emphasised on the importance of socio-cultural and locally anchored group embeddedness. These pedagogues share a strong feeling of belonging to a collective “we”. In this paradigm, pedagogy forms a natural and integral part of community life; it is an unquestioned aspect of the collectively prescribed code of conduct. The reflexive pedagogue model represents an individuated form of commitment in which the focus shifts to the pedagogue as an individual actor (Wuthnow, 1998).

Collective pedagogue efforts are rooted in communal orientation. The prime motivation is an obvious sense of duty and responsibility to a local community or more abstract collectivity. Very often this prototype is embedded in a religious tradition of benevolence and altruism or inspired by a co-ordinating ideology or meaning system. Dedication to the common good is a highly esteemed asset to which deviating individual motivations are easily subordinated. In a reflexive pedagogy framework, the interaction between individualised biography and pedagogue experience are intensified. The self-reflexive biographical quest becomes the driving force for primarily self-centred pedagogue attitudes. The motivations of reflexive pedagogues chiefly arise from experiences of biographical discontinuity both caused by unintended life crisis and by actively chosen biographical re-orientations (Hustinx, 2001).

On the other hand, the pedagogy field is seen as a market of possibilities for self-realisation and the setting of personal goals. The explicit orientation of reflexive pedagogues, however, do not support the popular image of the individual pedagogue using solidarity as a smart way of pursuing self-interest (Evers, 1999). Several authors observe stronger support of self-directed or instrumentalised motives among more “modernised” or younger category of citizens (Jakob, 1993). In this situation, a pluralisation of motives occurs in which other and self-directed impulses are not necessarily at odds but come

to strengthen and enrich each other (Wuthnow, 1999). A solitary or altruistic individualism symbolises the seemingly contradictory motivational basis of the reflexive type of pedagogy.

In a collective frame, strong group based identities and behavioural imperatives ensure a continuum and predictable life course. This socially uniform “normal” biography provides a solid ground for a long-term, unconditional and regular pedagogue involvement. Collective pedagogues act from a strong and obvious sense of duty towards community or group of reference. The close association between service, group affiliation and identity affirmation further reinforces the quasi-lifelong efforts of collective pedagogues. The self-evident subordination to collective perceptions furthermore results in an all-embracing very intensive involvement that is relatively independent of the specific problems or beneficiaries. There is a general and deeply ingrained propensity to strive for the common good of the community or group to which one belongs, reaching beyond the singularity of particular pedagogue initiatives or organisations. As a result of the natural and total devotion, collective pedagogues are likely to represent the core members of voluntary organisations (Pearce, 1993).

In a reflexive modern the social environment, the time structure of pedagogue involvement radically changes. The unpredictability and discontinuity of the individualised biography are reflected in the sense of irregular and incidental pedagogue commitments. In contrast to the enduring involvement of the collective pedagogue, reflexive pedagogy is phased in separate and limited sequences with a specific, highly individualised and biographical reference. It represents a dynamic involvement with frequent entries and withdrawals depending on individual biographical needs and conditions. Since longevity of service results from active considerations about the “goodness of fit” between pedagogue experiences and biographical circumstances,

reflexive pedagogues demand a considerable amount of flexibility and mobility allowing them to continually shift between activities and organisations according to their own biographical whims. They prefer successive ad-hoc or project-based arrangements with pedagogue assignments that are clearly limited in time and space (Wuthnow, 1998). In this formula, the duration and intensity of involvement are fully adaptable to the preferences and possibilities of pedagogues. The crumbling time horizons of reflexive pedagogues thus result in rather ephemeral (Pearce, 1993) or loose (Wuthnow, 1998) involvements.

Collective pedagogy ideal typically thrives in a structured membership based socially or ideologically divided organisational environment. Collective pedagogues are likely to operate through overlapping involvements within a dense rather insular local network of organisations associated with their community or group of reference. A strong leadership core organises group pedagogy and co-ordinates the involvement of individual group members (Eckstein, 2001). Because of the static and closed nature of strong place based social networks in which collective pedagogues typically operate, social involvement acquires a very specific symbolic meaning. It is a way of re-affirming shared group identity and tight integration in a stable community. As a result the organisation is an important locus of socialisation, the strengthening of group ties, a tight coupling between formal and group memberships and pedagogy exists. Being a member above all, collective pedagogues strongly identify with the values and goals of the organisation on the whole rather than purely for the work they undertake (Cameron, 1999). Service to the organisation is primarily understood as loyalty, that is, more an implicit sense of obligation to fellow members than a deep inner commitment to the cause (Wuthnow, 1998).

The reflexive pedagogue does not participate for the sake of belonging to group-bounded organisations, but is more pragmatically

focused on services offered or activities undertaken. In response to these functionally oriented and increasingly individualised pedagogue dispositions, there has been a remarkable mushrooming of new institutional structures directed at tailoring pedagogue activities to private interests and preferences of the pedagogues instead of puning the organisational targets first (Anheier & Salamon, 1999). In these new pedagogue-centred initiatives, the organisational role shifts from being the central focus of pedagogue action to a kind of “enabling structure”, a mediator between a pedagogue and a specific project. This implies that reflexive pedagogues may become structurally detached from any one particular location or organisational attachments. Without strong organisational anachments reflexive pedagogues are a moving target (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003).

In a collective framework, group based politics stipulates the pedagogue’s choice of the field of action and activity. The field in which one operates is determined by a self-evident affinity with shared ideologies, religious conditions, and collective identities. This type of pedagogy is based on a universalisation of common culture and way of living. It is inspired by strong universal identities that include rich symbols and moral standards. Identification with these strong identities is based on inclusion and exclusion. Collective grounded pedagogy is parochial and contained in the scope, confined to people and groups associated with the community as socially constructed (Eckstein, 2001). It typically reflects the idea of bonding, place based social capital (Putnam, 2000). In this context, entry into a particular field of pedagogue action is not dependent on individual decisions but it is typically initiated and supervised by others; charismatic community leaders, influential representatives of local organisations or churches (Eckstein, 2001).

Collective pedagogues carry out activities that are directed to the community at large. They consequently operate in a multipurpose

set up and are likely to perform an extensive diffused set of activities. These kinds of activities performed moreover correspond to collectively defined identity and roles (Wuthnow, 1998). In a reflexive pedagogy context, processes of individualisation and globalisation create a paradoxical relation between social closeness and geographical distance that crystallises in a situation of local disintegration and global integration. Instead of being anchored in geographical proximity or standardised group cultures and feelings of belonging are increasingly self-selected on the basis of shared interests. These elective social configurations produce a more privatised and self-induced form of solidarity that is inspired by lifestyle and identity politics. There is a “universalisation of particularities”, a process in which pre-given collective identifications are replaced by daily feelings of solidarity that are based on individual perceptions of sameness or shared life experiences and problems.

These new models of inclusion, however, are of a very precarious nature and can rapidly change as a result of new striking similarities between life stories. These reflexive connotations through shares life experiences and everyday life concerns are the expression of a broader shift towards “post-materialistic” value pattern which marks a shift from political cleavages based on the social class conflict towards cleavages based in cultural issues and quality of life concerns. In addition to this increasing preference for new themes and fields of action, pedagogy has entered the era of globalisation (Anheier & Salamon, 1999).

The choice of activity is also affected by the pedagogue’s detachment from the collective frame of reference. Being a pedagogue increasingly becomes a specialised role with a narrow scope (Wuthnow, 1990, 1998). Instead of a co-ordinating ideology or shared goal, personal preferences and needs dictate what kind of pedagogue activities are performed. The prevalence of self-centred

pedagogue attitudes consequently finds its reflection in a “focused activism”. Moreover, pedagogue activities are chosen depending on their concrete and practical nature. Idealism is replaced by more tangible and pragmatic goals.

Phenomenology of Consciousness-Raising Praxis and the Need for a Hybrid Approach to Social Pedagogy

Consciousness-raising praxis in civil society is not a contingent and empirical fact; it is an analytical truth that follows from the composite term itself. This is now been recognized and has undoubtedly contributed to the need for growth of literature on economic empowerment models which can be promoted through social enterprise and specifically of a hybrid type.

Most traditional work has investigated hybrids by societal sector, with an emphasis on cross-overs between “private” and “public” enterprise under the assumption of a dichotomous model. One focus has been on the interplay of markets and hierarchies as coordination mechanisms, with networks being a hybrid third (Makadok & Coff 2009). Practice models discussed in the context of consciousness-raising praxis include public-private partnerships and the outsourcing of government functions (Préfontaine 2008; Bollecker & Nobre 2010) or corporate-NGO collaboration (Dahan et al. 2010). Many other studies have limited their discussions of social enterprise in the domain of consciousness-raising praxis to the field of non-profit management (Dees 1998; Ben-Ner 2001; Dart 2004; Landsberg 2004; Young 2007; Hoffman, Badiane & Haigh 2012). In a sense, even another dichotomy is bridged – that between the creation and redistribution of economic value, as social milieus increasingly move into production and, differently from many privately held businesses, at the same time are attentive to socially desirable distributive results (Santos 2009; Becchetti & Borzaga 2010).

Hybridization is thus a need as most of these businesses can be attributed to the civil economy, i.e. the market economy under the guidance of civil society (Bruni 2010; Bruni & Zamagni 2007). The fundamental characteristic of the civil economy is to understand the market as a co-operative organization rather than a competitive arena and milieus as communities pursuing social projects (including those of producing goods and services for private consumption at market prices) (Becchetti, Bruni & Zamagni 2010: 312f.). Hybrid social pedagogy for consciousness-raising praxis then has a dual goal at the microeconomic level to pursue projects that address specific social needs, and at the macroeconomic level to advance the civil economy within the economy as a whole.

A Hybrid Model of Social Pedagogy in Civil Society Geared Towards Consciousness-Raising Praxis

In hybrid models, pedagogy is the synthesizing agency that makes disparate elements coalesce. Construal of social pedagogy for consciousness-raising praxis from the viewpoint of philosophical idealism (whether in the form of constructivism, operationalism, or instrumentalism) must fail. Neither do social pedagogues provide symbolic value to their beneficiaries nor are the latter's needs anything but real. Rather, social pedagogues working towards consciousness-raising praxis must be envisaged as being motivated by a particular vocation and as having certain character traits (i.e., virtues) that allow them to act on their vocation (Teehanke 2008; Sirico 2010; Bruni & Smerilli 2009; Bruni 2011). The hallmark of social pedagogues (which need not necessarily exist in managers of social milieus) is personal commitment to a cause.

Against the background of Aristotelian philosophy, a stronger model of pedagogy of consciousness-raising praxis can be developed that exhibits a better fit with social enterprise (Dembinski 2006). It

is based on the pedagogues being causal agents, where for Aristotle, contrary to the presently dominant view, a cause is not what transforms A into B, but the transformation (or process) itself. Pedagogy rather than instances of pedagogues is therefore the explanandum.

Causation in this sense must not be understood as $A \Rightarrow B$ where $A < B$ (in the sense of temporal antecedence). Rather, the cause of B lies in its nature (or form), or what today might be rendered as its explanatory factors; a cause makes something else what it is. There are four such causes: the form of the object (A is what it is to be B), the matter underlying the object (A is what B is made out of), the agency that brings about the change (A is what produces B), and the purpose served by the change (A is what B is for) (Physics II.3, 194b24 ff.). These are called, respectively, the formal, material, efficient, and final cause (Falcon 2006). Hybrid social pedagogy for consciousness-raising praxis is influenced by all these, together with subjective visions, in a particular functional form:

Hybrid social pedagogy for consciousness-raising praxis = [f (vision, motivation, perceived opportunities, institutions)] \Rightarrow purpose

This model can then be depicted graphically (Figure1, as an elaboration of Dembinski 2006: 349):

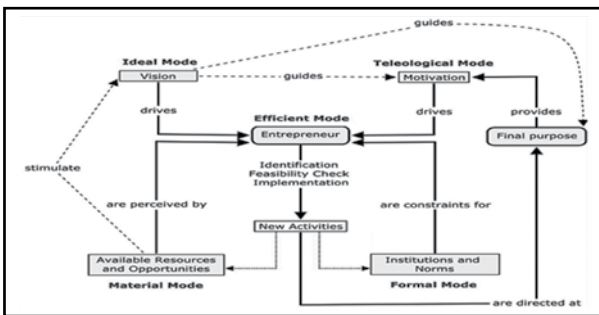


Figure 1: A Model of Hybrid Social Pedagogy for Consciousness-Raising Praxis

This pedagogical aspect does not only denotes coordinating resources or recognizing opportunities while translating them into profitable ventures but optimizes a system composed of material and immaterial factors by using practical reason to direct the process towards a final purpose recognized to be good. Driven by visions, pedagogues judge resources and opportunities as well as institutions and norms as to their mutual fit. These are real and causal relations on the basis of which new activities are planned that are directed at a final purpose, which in turn provides motivation. To make the model more complete, three relations on the “idealist” plane (represented by broken lines) are also accommodated: subjective visions can influence the choice and acceptance of the final purpose as well as guide motivation, and available resources and opportunities may stimulate the vision of pedagogues. New activities can create new resources and opportunities but also modify institutions and norms, which leads to feedback loops (represented by dotted lines) and makes pedagogy an interactive process. The components affect pedagogues differently, viz. by the four Aristotelian modes of causation. In this sense, pedagogy is an intentional, purpose-driven activity that is based on acts of judging enhancing and detracting factors, and social pedagogy is characterized by a specific final purpose. So conceived it has a better chance of actually being the synthesizing agent that makes social enterprise possible, which because of its hybrid nature is characterized by an ineradicable complexity and requires significant energy to coalesce the necessary components (McKelvey 2004; Goldstein, Hazy & Silberstang 2009, 2010).

A robust hybrid social enterprise must be built with an integrated network of nodes and connections with the knowledge of who the constituents of the business are and where they can find value individually and together as a whole (= ecosystem). If such an enterprise can also rely on collaboration in the workplace

which translate into intensified stakeholder contacts, the model is that of a hive (= hivemind). Social milieus differ as to the strength and frequency their customers send information about changes in markets, for example about the need by potential beneficiaries of support (= dynamic signal). Lastly, social milieus must pick up these signals and process the information efficiently so that it leads to the required social action (= metafilter). These patterns are design elements that apply cumulatively by emphasizing, respectively, community, culture, collaboration, and content. These seem to be necessary ingredient of all social practice models.

Generally, a social enterprise for consciousness-raising praxis related planning occurs at several levels such as Tactics, Strategy, Practice model, Enterprise ontology (applied and regional) and Ontology (formal and general).

Strategy is founded on a practice model, and tactics is founded on strategy (Seddon et al. 2004; Casadesus-Masanell & Ricart 2010). A model of social enterprise for consciousness-raising praxis depends on an underlying enterprise ontology, which defines an enterprise as a system consisting of a composition, structure, environment, and production. The functionality or nature of an enterprise business is then understood based on the products and services delivered to the environment. Being applied and regional (i.e., specific to milieus), this level relies on a general (and formally expressed) ontology that specifies the ingredients of reality and their relations. All levels are emergent with respect to the lower ones. Analysis of social pedagogy considers higher levels (although assumptions about lower levels must implicitly be made).

For consciousness-raising praxis oriented hybrid pedagogical model, not only the transacting parties but also the objects of transactions (e.g., meals or medical services) are constitutive of

social relations. The nature of a project determines whether or not to attribute it to social pedagogy. This relation is not abstract but concrete and expresses what a project does for a target group, e.g. providing housing through concessionary loans. Envisioning such a structure brings social pedagogy, despite its market-based characteristics, close to gift-giving as described by anthropologists (Descombes 1996; Hénaff 2010: 418f.) and to the “logic of gift”. Social rationality is “situated” or “embedded” in particular settings. This would imply that manufacturers of consumer goods should always target specific groups rather than produce for an “anonymous” mass market and that social pedagogy projects must be developed by providing specific services for specific beneficiaries. Three components already allow for constellations that add up to complex practice models (Malki 2009).

Social milieus can be classified by their mission orientation, by the level of integration between non-profit social programs and for-profit business, and by their intended target markets (Alter 2006). This is a three-stage process of integration between profit-oriented and non-profit businesses. They largely correspond to the philanthropic, transactional, and integrative collaboration described elsewhere (Austin 2000). At the external stage, the relationship is one-sided, as one between a charitable donor and a recipient; there are no elements of integrated strategies or management functions. At the integrated stage, the flow of benefits becomes bilateral as resources are exchanged and learning becomes mutual, and at the embedded stage, the principles characteristic of the two types of enterprise have merged at the levels of strategy and execution such that social programs are managed with the efficiency typical of private business, and for-profit projects are designed with responsibility and care for others.

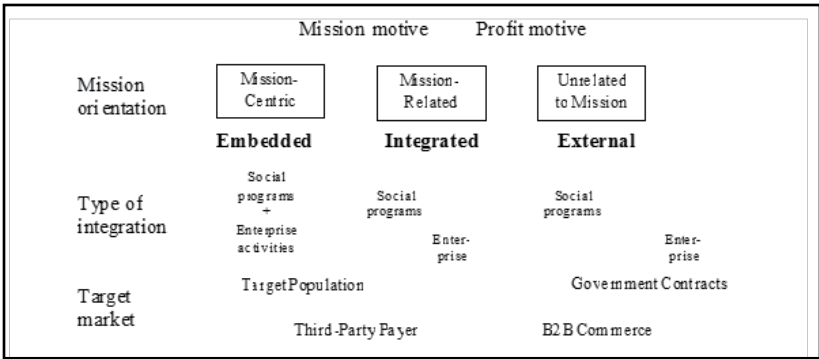


Figure 2: Micro-Typology of Hybrid Social Milieus Geared Towards Consciousness-Raising Praxis

If there are three types of mission-orientation, three types of integration between not-for-profit and for-profit activities, and five types of target markets, there would be $3 \times 3 \times 5 = 45$ possible combinations. The options have been further consolidated into nine fundamental types of practice models for hybrid social milieus geared towards consciousness-raising praxis which are feasible and indeed widely implemented (Alter 2006) (Figure 3):

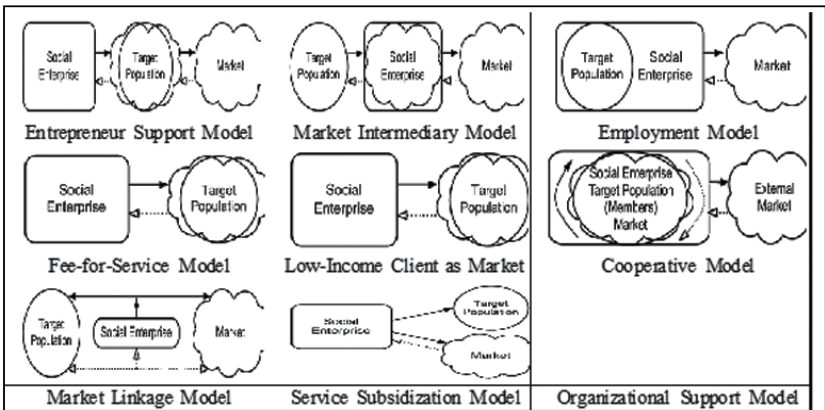


Figure 3: Types of Practice Models for Hybrid Social Milieus Geared Towards Consciousness-Raising Praxis

Examples of these models can readily be identified. There are co-operative movements for farmers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, and consumers that in some countries have become formidable players on factor and consumer markets (Cooperative Model). They allow smaller suppliers to bundle their otherwise atomistic market power to compete with multi-national corporations and thus at least partially to overcome diseconomies of scale. Several institutional forms have been created ranging from limited partnerships to marketing co-operatives and consortia based on rules of both efficiency and equity (Grassl 1998). Micro- lending on the Grameen model has facilitated the emergence of a new class of business owners in less developed countries (Pedagogue Support Model). Ethical investment funds and fair trade organizations complement this trend (Organizational Support Model). Social milieus that facilitate the performance of target populations on markets, for example by providing training or loan guarantees, make up the Market Linkage Model. In the United States, the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae), which is a government-sponsored and publicly traded company with the purpose of expanding the secondary mortgage market by securitizing mortgages in the form of mortgage-backed securities, is an example (Koppell 2003). The worldwide Economy of Communion as a project of the Focolare Movement is a network of businesses that freely choose to share their profits according to three principles of equal importance – to grow their businesses, help people in need, and spread the culture of giving (Service Subsidization Model) (Gold 2010).

An argument can be made that, underlying the nine possible types, there is an even smaller number of basic configurations. If a practice model is understood as a system, an analogy to Gibbs' phase rule in thermodynamics may be suggested: $F = C - P + 2$, where F = number of degrees of freedom for a system, C =

number of independent components of the system at equilibrium, and P = number of phases (which in chemistry are solids, liquids, and gases). The generic practice model has three components ($C = 3$). The number of phases may be assumed as three ($P = 3$) in accordance with a triadic ontology, e.g. by being either a private, public, or communally owned and managed enterprise. Under these assumptions, a practice model for social enterprise would have $F = 2$, with degrees of freedom being the number of intensive variables which are independent of each other. F expresses in how many ways an enterprise can “do business.” Gibbs’ rule would predict two such ways – seeking profit or not. Although there may be degrees of mission-orientation, this basic distinction still holds (and is usually required under tax law and sometimes and corporate law). If more complex models are devised (e.g., $C > 3$), the number of possible variations will increase. The enhanced hybridity of business allows for a greater number of successful practice models though the promising options will still remain few.

Applying insights of organization design to social pedagogy then means discovering the triadic nature of organizations in the dimensions of strategy, structure, and process, which are the key determinants of performance. How organizations compete is defined by the triad of differentiation, economy, and interaction, how they grow by the options of buying, making, or partnering, and how they organize by decentralization, centralization, or collaboration (Keidel 2010: 66ff.).

Social pedagogy is then a process of decision-making at various levels of complexity within a clear hierarchy of cognitive levels (Ross 2009). This model also mirrors how hybridity in business comes about within networks of complex interactions that produce novel emergent properties through recombination. Hybridity is no longer understood as a mixture of characteristics along a

continuum between two opposite poles but consists of elements of diverse origin that are deeply integrated and yet preserve the identities of their constituents.

Concluding Remarks

Hybridity in social pedagogy can emerge through the mixture at the level of structure or processes (organizational hybrids), or through strategy (strategic hybrids). However, for stable strategic hybridity always presuppose some amount of organizational hybridity. Depending on the type of hybridization, milieus will reflect the natures of their original components to different degrees. Hybridization is categorized into the following types: transplantation, cross-fertilization, and mutation. For instance, Transplantation, would be the case of a private-sector for-profit business that operates under the radically different conditions of the public sector, and cross-fertilization would be a mutual learning between an NPO and a traditional for-profit corporation. Forms of hybridity can be several and a complete theory still awaits elaboration.

The critical distinction of social pedagogy in the civil society context geared towards consciousness-raising praxis lies in something real – the value proposition itself. Any promising practice model for the social enterprise must, in the light of the previous analysis, fulfil these necessary (if not yet sufficient) conditions:

1. It must be driven by a social mission (i.e., abstain from distributing profit to shareholders);
2. It must generate for positive externalities (spill overs) for society;
3. It must recognize the centrality of the pedagogical function;
4. It must achieve competitiveness on markets through effective planning and management.

The implications of this reorientation are important. No longer must social enterprise, as “intermediate bodies”, be attributed to some ill-defined “third sector” nor must they be identified with “non-profit” business. Creation of economic and of social value must not diverge, and the latter must not be understood to correct the results of the first (Grassl & Habisch 2011; Grassl 2012). Design tools can be used to map out feasible models within an ever more heterogeneous landscape of hybrid consciousness-raising praxis oriented business (Morris, Schindehutte & Allen 2005; Brown & Wyatt 2010; Casadesus-Masanell & Ricart 2011).

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Addressing Drop-Out among Tribal School Students through Agriculture Teaching in Dantewada

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Abstract

Dantewada, is a district with two-third tribal population. It is also one among the districts of having lowest literacy rate in the country. There has been observed a large number of students drop-out at every level of school education. However, it is important to address the issue of drop-out among teenagers because of their inclination to join the conflict prevalent in the region between the state and the Naxalites. A unique experiment was therefore carried out to re-enrol such drop-out students back to schools and allow them to learn agricultural activities in practical ways. The curriculum prescribed by the textbooks and connected with the natural resources have made available in the region. The paper would narrate the journey of this initiative in Dantewada and present a tentative structure of how school education could be remodelled around the forest and agriculture based school education in tribal areas.

Introduction

Dantewadaa district is in South-Chhattisgarhis part of the Bastar region. It is inhabited mostly by tribal communities such as Gond (Muria, Madia), Bhatra, Paraja, and Dorala. Earlier the district comprised of the entire South-Bastar region which included the districts of Bijapur and Sukma. At present, it is divided into four development blocks namely, Dantewada, Geedam, Katekalyan and Kuwakonda.

Dantewada was the least educated district in the country with just 30 percent literacy in the year 2001. The situation has improved a little within last 15 years and the literacy rate rose to 42 percent as reported in 2011 census. In 2015, there were 1047 schools in the district in which 49,413 students (26,636 boys, 22,777 girls) were enrolled at the elementary level and 10,891 students (5,640 boys and 5,251 girls) were enrolled in high and higher secondary schools.

From the 1980s onwards, the district has been an active site for Naxalite mobilization. It resulted into an intense civil strife against them from 2005 to 2009. The Salwa Judum Movement taken place during this time. The Civil Strife like Salwa Judum, impacted directly on 200 schools. They either destroyed or shut down by the Naxalites as part of their policy to target all the permanent structures in the villages. This was done by them to make sure that local police and paramilitary forces do not stay in those school buildings during their combing operations and turn them into permanent camps with automatic weapons being established on the roof the school buildings. This ultimately led to massive displacement of schools. In response to this crisis, the district administration came up with the idea of establishing Portable Cabin (PC) in the residential schools made of bamboo sheets. These structures can accommodate around 500 students each. Much easier to set up, without any objection from the Naxalites, as they were devoid of any pucca roof, which meant that no heavy weapons could be installed over them. As of now, there are 17 such portable residential schools are functioning in the district. Although these portable cabin residential schools are mandated to provide elementary education. Later, many of these schools have been upgraded into higher secondary schools.

Dantewada faces a high drop-out rate at primary and upper-primary level. According to the District Information System for Education data, less than 25 percent of children who enrol in class I are able to reach class VIII. The drop-out rate even after class VIII is again very high and is primarily because of two reasons. Firstly, the basic eligibility to take up a police job is standard X education across the state. This criteria have been relaxed to standard VIII for recruitment in Bastar, especially for the newly raised Bastar Battalion, a paramilitary force of local tribal boys and girls raised especially to fight Naxalites. Secondly, recruitment by Naxalites also generally takes between the age of 14 and 16, the age at which children would be in class IX and X. Thus, the teenager faces the dual risk of being acquired for a life-threatening job without being particularly aware of it while joining it.

According to the statistics provided by the district administration and trends observed on the field, this is found that the enrolment ratio is quite good for students who pass out from standard VIII and more than 90 percent students were able to enrol for class IX. This could become possible because of pro-active measures taken by the district education department which included sending child's transfer certificate (TC) to the nearest high school to ensure that s/he can be tracked. Students were also found to be aware of the next school they were supposed to go and were found to be scouting for the best possible option for themselves. However, an acute problem of dropout was found after students enrolled in class IX.

Enrolment of Students in Higher Secondary Schools

Year/ Class	2013-14			2014-15		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
IX	2075	1750	3825	2256	1976	4232
X	1663	1461	3124	1442	1414	2856
XI	1011	948	1959	1039	981	2020
XII	726	619	1345	903	880	1783
Total	5475	4778	10253	5460	5251	10891

Source: District Education Officer, Dantewada

If one looks at the mention figures above, it shows the number of boys and girls in standard IX in the year 2013-14 who should get enrolled in standard X. In 2014-15, came down drastically from 3,825 to 2,856. Thus 25 percent out of total students who enrolled in class IX dropped out of school. Same is the case during the transition period from standard X to XI during which 35 percent students drop out of school.

While looking in these figures, one has to keep in mind that the figures also contain those students who fail and repeat a particular class. They form a large number, but their exact statistics are currently not available. According to the rules of Chhattisgarh Board of Secondary Education, a child who has failed continuously twice in a particular class cannot be allowed to continue as a regular student.

They dropped out midway for several reasons. Due to no detention policy implemented under Right to Education Act, teachers at primary and middle levels were found to have abdicated their responsibility to teach. Teachers felt that a child will have to be promoted to next standard irrespective of their teaching efforts. Even in middle schools, where subject specific-teachers are available,

teachers often give up on their responsibility of teaching the foundational material to students at such advanced level by blaming primary school teachers for not creating the base of students.

There are several reasons for this poor learning among children. One of the primary reason is that most of these students come from Gondi language speaking families. Gondi belongs to the Dravidian family of languages and has very few similarities with Hindi. Thus, when a child is taught by teachers from Hindi heartland, without any understanding of children's local language, the children fail to learn anything in the classroom. This leads to a process where a teacher cannot understand what the child is trying to say and the child hardly understands the language of the teacher.

Children in middle schools (i.e. class VI to VIII) are hardly able to read simple Hindi, the mode of teaching in government schools. This not only affects their language learning, their comprehension of other subjects, especially math and science gets significantly affected too. Thus, illiterate students are being produced after eight long years of elementary education and training. When they face exams in IX standard, where failure means detention in the same class, they find it hard to digest and lead to major student's dropout.

Ideally, the State Council for Education Research and Training (SCERT) should work in the field of providing multi-lingual education to these children. However, they have been able to develop only some basic text material for primary class students and have introduced few chapters in the local language in Hindi textbooks for students from class III to class VIII. The chapters are mostly in Gondi language, but written using Devanagari script and therefore feel like an exercise in futility when children are hardly able to read the basic text.

This shows in the form of poor learning standard of students and reflects in their performance in standard IX where children fail in almost all the subjects during the initial few months. The reason behind this is that children are not able to grasp the complicated concepts prescribed in the syllabus of standard IX. They, therefore, lose motivation to learn and feel alienated from the rest of the class thereby dropping-out before the end of the year. Also, the high schools in the district are quite a few in number and the geographical distance to them from the children's village poses a great barrier for even those students who are interested in studying. Some students also drop-out because of lack of hostel facility in a nearby schools. Personal reasons, such as crisis in the family or poor economic condition, also lead to students dropping-out from schools.

This can be said for sure that not a single drop-out student was found to be missing and said to have joined Naxals. Thus, at least in Dantewada, the hypothesis that students drop-out to join Naxals turned out to be false. However, many of the students were found to missing school for several weeks so as to train for joining Bastar Battalion. Some of these students later left their studies once they were selected for the battalion.

Therefore as part of a fellowship program which ran from June 2015 to May 2017, A fieldwork is initiated by myself to re-enrol these teenage drop-out students, mostly in between the age of 14 and 18, so as to ensure that these students continue their schooling and be in position to make relevant choices on the basis of an understanding they develop during a course of liberal education.

Tracking Drop-Out Students

According to the prevalent definition of drop-out, a child who does not go to school continuously for two months can be

considered as a drop-out. There is, however, no mechanism to find out how many students drop-out each year. When we tried to find out through the district administration, they did hand over to us the information they collect every year in a particular format. However there is a great discrepancy in data which was given to us and what was found out in the field visits made to 11 schools on the basis of it. Thus, the departmental data being unreliable was given up in favour of field-level data.

The drop-out students were approached by going to their village and convincing them about continuing their school education. Those who agreed and were tried to re-enrol in the nearest school it was found that the system was quite adversarial in admitting these students (especially those who have missed at least one year of schooling). This was primarily because these government schools were anyhow hardly being able to cope with the pressure of existing regular students due to limited resources available at their disposal. Teachers, therefore, found it difficult to digest the idea of admitting a student who had lost touch with regular form of education. They were sceptical about whether s/he would be able to keep pace with the regular students. Despite all these difficulties around 30 drop-out tribal students were admitted to schools in two years.

Some of these students soon began dropping out again as felt stifled among their peers who were far ahead in their classroom learning by virtue of being regular students. The drop-outs also could not relate themselves to the curriculum being taught because of one-year gap from their previous learning. However, one of the most important factors was that they could simply not study because they did not know how to read and write. This led to them failing miserably in their classroom tests and semester examinations further leading to a sense of social shame and strongly undermined their confidence level.

An Agricultural Solution to Drop-Out Problem

Thus, a form of education which could overcome the barrier of reading and writing was required. And the answer to that was not far. The district administration already runs a program called Introduction to Basic Technology (IBT) with the help of an organisation called Vigyan Ashram based in Pune. It imparts skill training in four trades: home and health, workshop, electrical and agriculture. Although designed for class IX and X students, the program was being run for from class VI to VIII in all the 17 portable cabin schools of the district due to limited funding options.

It is also observed that agriculture trade was functioning far more successfully than others. The reasons were multiple, but the primary one was that boys and girls of tribal communities, who essentially grow up among the forest, find it natural to connect with plants and animals. They wanted such an education which imparts them knowledge about the resources they already possessed.

Thus, began a basic search to provide vocational education in form of agriculture. Surprisingly, there were seven schools in the district, which offered agriculture as a subject, just like science and commerce, in class XI and XII. Most of the schools had initiated the subject because of an administrator's efforts towards promoting agriculture in the region. However, the administrator couldn't provide agriculture teachers in these schools.

An opportunity was seen there and a project was launched to turn agriculture into a subject which could be taught practically without the necessity of specialised reading and writing skills. The project was initiated in seven schools of Dantewada which had a total of approximately 650 students in class XI and XII, who had opted to study agriculture or rather assigned to study agriculture as

teachers automatically preferred their top students to pursue science and the remaining were distributed among agriculture and art.

In a first step, the district administration was pursued to hire fresh Bachelor of Science in Agriculture graduates as contractual temporary teachers. These graduates took up the mantle of teaching the basic curriculum prescribed by the state government. In addition, they were asked to develop a farm within the school premise so that students could do practical experiments about what they were learning in the classroom. They were also encouraged to take students for field visits so as to identify various varieties of paddy grown around in the area and the pests which attack them. On the basis of their observation, students then made a scrapbook (herbarium).

Thereafter a basic agriculture laboratory was set up in all the schools by providing them with basic items required for day-to-day field work. Principals and agriculture teachers were authorised to make the purchase, according to the requirement of their school. This led to lots of stuff being purchased according to the capacity of agriculture teacher to use them.

Apart from the local initiative, various government departments of district administration, such as agriculture, fisheries, veterinary, sericulture, Krishi-Vigyan Kendra, Kshir-Sagar Milk Processing Centre, department, agriculture, engineering department, and few NGOs working in the field of agriculture and education such as Bachpan-Banao, Nirmaan and Vigyan Ashram were also roped in. These organisations facilitated students' visit to their project sites. Horticulture and forest departments were also approached, but their partnership could not lead to any definite collaboration due to several constrains ranging from lack of availability of trainers to project being on hold during the students' learning cycle. A brief description of the project sites visited by students is as follows:

Veterinary Hospital: Students visit the veterinary hospital nearest from their school where doctors introduced them to instruments used by them during the day to day operations. This includes mostly those used in treatment of cows such as teat siphon, trocar and cannula, Burdizzo Castrator, dehorner, etc. Doctors also inform them about various diseases in animals such as cows, pigs, hens, goat and common vaccines and medicines used in their treatments. The students listen in rapt attention and often raise questions about the diseases they have seen in their cows, pigs and hens. Their curiosity often ranges from the best variety of cock for fight to the reasons behind mass death of cows. The department also provides students with colourful charts of various breeds of all the animals and common diseases affecting them. They are also told about various schemes being run by the department giving students an option to avail the help of those, in case if they drop-out.

Silkworm Rearing Centre: The deputy director of sericulture department and senior silk inspector teach students about the life cycle of a silkworm. Students visit the silkworm rearing centre and observe various stages of growth right from the egg stage to larva, pupa and moth and witness the process of how a cocoon is prepared by a caterpillar. Students also get to observe the stifling of pupa in the hot air chamber. They learn how the grading of cocoons is done on the basis of their cell weight and how are they priced. At the end, students visit the rearing centre in Narayanpur (200 kms. from Dantewada) to understand the process of removing thread silk threads from the cocoon. In the process, they are imparted the information that their forests are home to some of the rare varieties of silkworms in the world which produce a variety of silks limited to the region.

Poultry Farm: Tribal students who have seen mostly indigenous chicken in their house visit the only poultry farm

operational in the district. Detailed presentation on rearing broiler chicks, right from being brought from 500 kms faraway Balaghat district to the farm and being sold in the market, is given to them by the owner of poultry farm. An accompanying veterinary doctor from the animal husbandry department also explains about various vaccines given to chicks at regular intervals. Students are also told about identification markers of various diseases by looking at their symptoms.

Students then visit the poultry farm and have a close look at feeders, water-dispensers and bedding kept in poultry shed. They are told about the direction in which the rooms should be constructed and ways to keep the temperature under control during summer and winter. Students also learn about the cost of construction of poultry farm and steps followed to make it viable. This way they learn a bit about entrepreneurship when they are told that 40 such poultry farms were sanctioned by the department but only one could succeed. This was because of the integrated farming approach of the owner who grew the animal feed in his farm and reared fish simultaneously so as to cut costs and also use his resources in a sustainable manner. The doctor simultaneously informs students about the various schemes of the department related to poultry farming and how they could benefit from them.

Dairy Farm: Animal anatomy of Jersey and Holstein Friesian cows along with the indigenous Sahiwal breed is explained to students by doctors of veterinary department. They are told about growing Napier grass and Azolla as fodder for the animals. Under integrated farm management, students learn about rearing cows, goats, hens and fish simultaneously. In one of the dairy farms, students are able to see Sehore and Jamunapari breeds of goats too, which are reared across India for their meat and milk and also because of their good resistance to diseases.

Milk Processing Centre: Students visit the only milk processing unit in the district and learn about the idea of co-operative milk production. Processes such as chilling, pasteurization, homogenization and packaging of milk are seen by students under the guidance of. They also learn the process of making Paneer (cottage cheese), Khoa, Rabri and Lassi through live demonstration by the employees there. Although there is no practice of milking a cow in tribal culture, the government has been distributing cows to be milked for commercial purpose. These cows are, however finding it hard to survive the difficult temperature and climate conditions of the region and require extreme maintenance. Students learn these and know more about artificial insemination technique so as to cross-breed their cows with a better variety of bulls.

Agriculture Engineering Implements: The focus is on teaching students about three mechanized farm implements: cultivator, mould board plough and rotavator. This is because these they are easily available with the farmers due to being distributed by the government under their MochoBadi (paddy field fencing) scheme. Also, they are quite useful while growing paddy and vegetables. Students also get to see field demonstrations of reaper and disk-harrow, wherever they are available.

Preparing Jam, Jelly, and Sauce: Boys and girls were trained in making apple jam, guava jelly and tomato sauce by a trainer from NGO Vigyan Ashram (Pune) who is stationed in Dantewada. Students measure the contents during each process from beginning till end and take out the cost of preparing jam, jelly, and sauce from one kilogram of apple, guava and tomato respectively. This process teaches them about post-harvest processing and storage technique which can very well use for local products such as tamarind which is found in plenty.

Organic Farming: To ensure local knowledge sharing, a Farmer or Rural Agriculture Extension Officer (RAEO) of agriculture department of the local village gives training to students in preparation of Jeevamrut (micro-organism multiplier), Beejamrut (seed treatment medicine) and Handidawa (pot medicine). This ensures that the farmer shares his personal experience with students and instils confidence about the reliability of these preparations in regular use. The System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method is also shown to students through which paddy production can be increased without any addition of chemical fertilizers. Through this process, parents also get to know that their students are learning about the best practices prevalent locally and they too provide their input in the application of traditional knowledge.

School Assignment: A small portion of the farm was given to the students in groups and seeds such as mustard, kusum, wheat, maize, brinjal, tomato, carrot, radish, bottle-gourd, bitter-gourd, onion, green chillies, etc. were provided to them through Krishi Vigyan Kendra and agriculture department. Students saw some of the seeds and their varieties for the first time and it was a wonder for them to see such plants grow. Once grown, they also marketed their produce within the school campus. It helped them learn the practice of trade.

Students were also asked to collect local varieties of paddy seeds so as to understand their physical differences and also to be ready to use them for field demonstration next year. The process of seed collection has made them aware of several traditional varieties which are sown according to local climate conditions. With the help of NGO Nirmaan, students were also shown more than 40 varieties of paddy seeds collected from within the district itself. They were amazed to know about the variety and the fact that Bastar region is home to more than 15,000 varieties of paddy.

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK): Students get a synopsis of all the departments in KVK and get to see the following:

1. **Exhibition Centre:** The students do have a look at various exhibits such as stages of lac production, processed items such as sindoor (vermilion), kosara, rice, tikhur, honey, etc., along with multiple seed varieties of paddy, pulses, and oilseeds. This gives them a glimpse of how the produce from their forests are processed and marketed.
2. **Green House:** Role of a green house in keeping the temperature regulated and use of drip irrigation in conserving water is seen by students in capsicum plant. Students relate this to the greenhouse effect provided by their natural forest which are important to trap heat.
3. **Mushroom Production Center:** Training for production of oyster mushroom is regularly held by KVK and therefore students get to see mushrooms at various stages of its growth. They are also informed about the process for its commercial production. By observing this students get an idea about how they can similarly grow a wide variety of mushrooms which grow naturally in their forests.
4. **Agriculture Engineering Equipment:** Paddy sowing machine, seed grader, tikhur processing machine, chiraunji processing machine, rotavator, cultivator, mould board plough, disk harrow, potato slicer, etc are some of the implements students get to know about in the centre. They are encouraged to think about utilising these equipments in their farms as most of the tribes do have large land holdings, which they are hardly able to cultivate due to limited manpower available at their disposal.
5. **Soil Testing Laboratory:** Under the national scheme to

provide a soil health card to farmers, the district soil testing laboratory has been mandated to test around 16 types of minerals. Students learn about various machines used in the testing process and are told about the process of collecting soil sample. They come to know about the suitability of other crops, apart from millets and rice in their land.

6. **Vermicompost:** Fertilizer made by decomposing organic material by earthworms is seen by students. Side-by-side they also see the production of Azolla culture which is a good source of protein for young animals. Through this students understand the link between the fertility of their soil and various factors which aid in it.
7. **Black Bengal Goat:** Students study the anatomy of goat and learn about making an ideal structure for their rearing and upkeep.
8. **Kadakhnath Hens:** Known to be a rare breed found mostly in Jhabua district, these hens have been brought to Dantewada so as to give them to farmers under a local scheme. It is a matter of curiosity for them to see black eggs and black meat of this special hen.
9. **Rabi Crop:** Various crops such as those of pulses, oilseeds, cereals planted by KVK for their breeding programs is seen by students during the farm visit. They are able to connect with the process of seed selection through segregation of best and unadulterated variety so as to be able to use them for next season. They also get exposure to inter-cropping of horticulture crops being undertaken of fruit plants such as mango and pomegranate and get an idea about how they facilitate the growth of each other.

10. **Career Guidance:** At the end of their visit students are guided by subject matter specialists (SMS) of KVK in their respective fields on how to prepare for the entrance examination of pre-agriculture test and are motivated to pursue higher studies in the field of agriculture. Students would be encouraged to apply for agriculture entrance examination taken by Indian Council for Agriculture research and state agriculture university.

Conclusion:

The impact of all these initiatives was quite significant in providing practical education to students who do struggle to read and write. What was quite a visible sign was that the demand for field visits increased drastically, quite clearly showing the interest of students in learning things practically. The field visits also enabled tribal students, who are generally deemed shy by non-tribes because of lack of communication, to turn curious and become much more confident to ask questions without any hesitation. Their attendance in classes also improved quite significantly and their performance in class XII board exams also improved with all schools recording 90 percent and above pass percentage. Although this cannot be directly attributed to this initiative, but the initiative played an important role in bringing about a transformation.

Thus, more such vocational courses in the field of agro-forestry are required for teenagers, so as to give them meaningful exposure to the kind of education which could be of any practical use. This kind of vocational education integrated with curricular teaching can also address the huge number of dropouts in the region and help reduce the participation of youths in the conflict to a large extent.

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Inequalities in Higher Education: Narrations of Dalit students in Mumbai

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Many see higher education as an asset, a crucial determinant that enhances the prospects of upward mobility and equity, both in terms of social and economic developments, of any individual in particular, and a country as a whole. For the Dalits, higher education is not only a mechanism of upliftment and mobility, but also a tool to reconstruct the structures, which are historically made of privilege and power based on caste.

The National Higher Education Policy in 1986 has emphasised on three basic elements—access, equal access (equity), quality and excellence. However, the process of development in these sectors has been exclusionary for the marginalised sections like Dalits. While looking at caste in the urban scenario, there is a belief amongst many that the cities are ‘democratic’, and ‘caste free’. Dr. B R Ambedkar viewed cities as the space of liberation from caste prejudices that were rampant in the villages. However, the discrimination and deprivation as ‘exclusive inequalities’ continue to exist. (Deshpande, 2006)

As we move above the educational ladder, the gravity of these inequalities increases. Scholars have highlighted the link between caste, class and gender and the growing impact of the inequalities by these categories on the access and participation in higher education (Chanana, 2007), (Velaskar, 2007), (Paik, 2009). Hence, higher educational institutions are seen as a miniature of the hegemonic society evolved through the caste system. With the globalisation and cosmopolitan nature of the cities, dominance and subjugation of these inequalities are more entrenched with

changed manifestations. With Dr B. R. Ambedkar's call, many dalits came to cities to re-define their identities and contest the historical oppressions through attaining higher education. However, the creation of higher educational institutions and their milieu as 'neutral, safe and caste-free' spaces for Dalits is still an illusion.

Based on the in-depth interviews of eight students (male and female) from different streams, belonging to various villages of Maharashtra, the paper attempts to map the journey of Dalit students in accessing and adapting in the Higher Education Institutions in Mumbai. The paper is an effort in exploring the intricate intersections of caste, class and gender and its impact on them. The paper will try to comprehend the perception of these students vis-à-vis the importance of higher education in their lives.

Introduction

The caste system in India is one of the most sophisticated form of stratification. The imposition of social inequalities is preconditioned by the caste background one is born into and brought up in. Even after the constitutional abolition of untouchability in 1950, the vestiges of untouchability are seen in different behaviour and forms. The practices like prohibitions on the usage of same well, temples, drink from the same cup or glass, claim land, make the Dalit children sit at the back of classrooms, etc. are still prevalent. Dalits are relegated to the most menial of tasks, which make them to carry stigmatised identities. This is only to perpetuate the discrimination against them. All these affect every facet and dimension of social, economic, cultural and political arena of Dalit lives. Broadly speaking, a caste system is a process of placing people in ascribing occupation i.e. restricted occupation, excludes one caste from undertaking the occupation of another. To control entry of Dalits, all the structures and institutions of the society are monopolised by fewer upper castes.

Likewise, education has been conventionally based on the principles of inequality and hierarchy. Access to education was denied to the majority of the masses. The industrial revolution in the west, their policy of ‘modern’ (so-called) education and urbanisation led to a new western educated intellectual class, which contributed to the uplifting of the downtrodden. However, Brahmins were the first to receive a modern education, reap its fruits, thereby maintaining the supremacy in the fields of education, academics and knowledge production (Wankhede, 2013).

During the 19th and the 20th century, Maharashtra witnessed the upsurge of the educational movement for the women and untouchables under the leadership of the Jyotirao and Savitirmai Phule. For them, education provides Trirtiya Ratna or the third eye, meaning critical thinking or a critical consciousness, which will help in dismantling the power structures. After them, B R Ambedkar revisited and unfolded his vision that resulted in recognition of the Dalits, many welfare policies and special measures came into existence constitutionally to improve their status. Unlike upper caste theorists and nationalists, instead of focusing on merely ‘modernising’ education and gender relations, the Phules and Ambedkar tried to democratise them (Paik, 2014).

‘Education and political power were strongly emphasized by Ambedkar as key instruments in raising out of positions of degradation, gaining self-respect and staking a claim for an equal footing in the Indian community’ (Kamble,2009). For him, cities were the space of liberation and emancipation from the oppressive casteist structures and relations. He believed, city spaces could provide opportunities to reconstruct their stigmatised identities through higher education.

For Dalits, the life journey of Babasaheb, especially his confrontations with caste based discriminations, and his contribution

to the community has a tremendous impact. Taking inspiration from his life, many Dalits headed towards the cities in re-defining their identities. There was also a powerful conception that cities are caste-free and emancipatory, which made them to come to cities to explore jobs and education. Urbanisation and globalisation also attracted them to fetch more jobs.

Mumbai has been the centre point of the Dalit movement in terms of developing Dalit intellectual class. Knowing the communal outlook of the colleges in Mumbai (Ambedkar, 1945) and the need of higher education institution in the lives of dalits, Babasaheb founded the People's Education Society on 8th July, 1946 with the help of the Government of India (Velaskar, 2012). Under this society, the first college established in Mumbai was Siddhartha College of Arts and Science (to which commerce stream was added later). The main objective of the society was to provide education in such a manner as to promote intellectual, moral and social democracy.

The college came up to serve the downtrodden communities, but more particularly to the scheduled caste. Similarly, Chitins' (1972) article on 'Education for Equality' had mentioned that the enrolment of scheduled caste students in Mumbai has been high since it was the place where the journey of higher education and other allied activities started for the scheduled castes. Dr. B. R Ambedkar wanted Dalits to move towards cities where they would get ample opportunities primarily for educating their child as well as for work. In addition, there was nothing for them to lose in the cities. Even if they had to stay in the slums, their children gradually started getting opportunities for education. The first educated generation entered the workforce on early 1970s. This college is considered as the root for many Dalit movements and birthplace of many of the prominent Dalit activists and the political leaders.

The National Higher Education policy in 1986 has emphasised on three basic elements—access, equal access (equity), quality and excellence. However, the process of development in these sectors has been exclusionary for the marginalised sections like Dalits. As we move above the educational ladder, the gravity of these inequalities increases. The creation of higher educational institutions and their milieu as ‘neutral, safe and caste-free’ spaces for Dalits is still an illusion.

Caste and Education

The gradation of caste, class, gender, region, and religion in the society has always been the major concerns that have stratified the educational system in India. Its ramifications are very much visible in the educational institutions. As we move up in the educational ladder, we see that the nature and form of these inequalities increases. Likewise, the visibility of these inequalities is more as we move upward by the institution’s ranking of eliteness. For example, the labels such as reserved category students, inferiors, others, rude, dark skinned, characterless—especially for girl or women students and stigmas attached to their low socio-economic, educational backgrounds and lack of social and cultural capital.

The nature and extent of this additional burden (Anoop Kumar, 2013) imposed by the stigmatised identity of caste, affects the entire formation of their personalities. In a comparative study between students and staff of higher education campuses in India and the UK, Thornton and others (2010) stated that the ‘feeling like marginalization, isolation, invisible, and exclusion were prevalent among students from the marginalised sections. These feelings lead them to believe powerless, an outsider, and unworthy to pursue higher education. The cause for the arousal of these feelings was discrimination or mistreatment on the basis of social identity, gender, physical appearance, religion, etc.’

Wankhede (2013) observed that ‘Most of the SCs (scheduled caste) are first generation learners and find it difficult to cope with the higher educational standards’ (p. 192). They are also challenged by the difficulties such as their parent’s lack of exposure to formal education, economic deprivation, and hence are compelled to work and study concurrently. In addition to this, their poor socio-economic background by ascribing them with caste based occupation stigmatised their identities. Hence, higher educational institutions are seen as a miniature of the hegemonic society evolved through the caste system.

With the casteist and patriarchal attitude of the Indian society, Dalit women have always been very prone to triply jeopardised. They are discriminated because of their caste and gender not only from the upper castes men and women, but also from the men of their own community.

Scholars have highlighted the link between caste, class and gender and the growing impact of the inequalities by these categories on the access and participation in higher education (Chanana, 2007), (Velaskar, 2007), (Paik, 2009). Furthermore, Wankhede (2013) added that higher education among women remains and continues to remain the domination of girls or women coming from higher social and economic classes (p. 271).

The study

The reason for choosing this topic is the shared experiences of being an insider of the community with that of the narrations of the participants while collecting data for my Ph.D. thesis. Based on the in-depth interviews with eight students (both male and female), it includes the first-hand experiences of these students coming from different streams, belonging to various villages of Maharashtra. The study is an attempt in mapping the journey of Dalit students in accessing and adapting in different higher educational institutions in Mumbai.

The participants in this paper are mainly first generation learners, selected conveniently to bring out the varied experiences. The following narrations show their confrontations with inequalities based on caste-class and gender and the impact they have on their psychosocial upbringing and growth. The paper is an effort in exploring the intricate intersections of caste, class and gender and its impact on the formation of their identities.

Findings

The poor are treated with contempt everywhere. However, there is an additional dimension to this contempt when one is both poor and a Dalit. There is a direct impact of caste on economic status through things such as land ownership, access to resources, which have been traditionally dependent on caste status. This is how ‘natural’ exclusion of Dalits is achieved in the education system (Anoop Kumar, 2013). This caste-class status decides the resentment and the bias towards Dalits in the educational set up.

Priya shares how her life got fixed in the clutches of caste, gender and class. Her experience reflects the portions of life and structure of a Dalit family—

“Due to poor economic condition, I started working as a paid farmer since I was 8 years old. Even Saturday and Sundays were working days for us. I used to see other students in my class going home or tuitions, but I remember directly going to the fields to help my mother. This was the first time when I realised that this is what is meant to be a Dalit. The feeling of being low started crawling from that age. This affected my studies a lot. I was a very poor student. Every year I used to fail in at least three subjects. This way only, I could finish SSC on the second attempt. Being a girl

there was a constant nag in terms of household chores, sibling's responsibility, surveillance, and avoidance too. My mother always negotiated for us, but as a result, she has to go through a constant torture. This grew my aspirations for studies. Even after multiple failures, I never dropped out of it.”

Amit shares Language becomes an important criterion in differentiating the students in a class. The knowledge of English language has put upper caste students into stronger position and Dalits as inferiors. The subjects that are taught are difficult to understand since they do not match with the realities of the Dalits. There is no mention of the contribution of any of their leaders and their contribution questions their worthiness of taking higher education—

“The subjects were taught in English. For me, except a couple of words, everything was new. The use of big words and concepts created panic in me. I could never understand whatever being told in the class. I started losing my confidence in studies. This made me bunk many classes. Upper caste students used to get special attention from the teachers because of their understanding and language skills. This further created feeling of aloofness in me. I used to feel threatened in front of them because of my low confidence. This resulted in no involvement in class activities. I have started feeling inferior about my identity and existence.”

Amol shares how personal struggles against caste and class have always become part of the Dalit students. The negative attitude of the teachers and other students worsens the plights for Dalit students. Caste travels wherever we go. The notion that caste is diluted in the cities is debatable. It is true that caste based

discriminations are not found on the day to day basis as seen as in the villages, but the argument is questionable when it comes to an educational setup–

“Dalits were the most unwanted students in schools. Sitting on the last bench, sometimes outside the classroom, cleaning the bathroom, beaten-up black and blue by the teachers for not paying fees on time, caste based abuses were the common practices I have faced. There was always a negative attitude towards me by the teachers and non-Dalits students because of caste, colour and poverty. I was scared of English right from my childhood because of the beatings I had with my teacher. That has taken away my desire to even try to learn English. I always felt that I was too weak to learn. My doubts over myself restricted me to explore only arts related options. Coming to Mumbai was a different issue altogether. I feel caste travels with us wherever we go. I got ‘different’ experiences of the students. Initially, I was usually asked whether I am jaibhimwala. I was like a repelling object to them. My presence, words, appearance and even being in the class with upper caste were ‘unwanted’ and ‘inferior’ in their own spaces.

I feel earning and learning have been part and parcel of my life. I have worked as a sweeper, painter, as a worker on construction sites, helper under mechanic, in company, etc. I always have to earn to be able to continue my education and existence itself.”

In his narrative, Rohit is very conscious about his social location and is aware of all- round oppression and discrimination faced by the community. He has witnessed caste not only as a

student, but he is also attentive towards the role of caste among the teachers—

“I lived in Mahar-wada. When I think of the childhood instances now, I realise the brutality of caste system. I have seen how caste based atrocities get fabricated into a normalised act. The Society does not think it as a crime, but rather as something, which we deserve. The entire family is put under tremendous suffering. The notion of purity-pollution denigrates us below animals. Even in school, colleges, the teachers and students are full of hatred against us. There are discriminations both in direct and indirect ways. In my college, I do not know a single Dalit student who has not faced any discrimination based on caste, class and gender and there is no support system for us in terms of guiding us. There are our teachers too, but very less in numbers. Their subjects are mostly ‘soft subjects’ like Hindi, Marathi and History as compared to the upper castes teachers whose subjects will be ‘developmental and intelligent’. Because of the ‘easy choice’ of their subjects, they were not given much importance.”

Deepa, shares Dalit student is not just an individual, s/he has to share the responsibility of raising and looking after her siblings. This becomes an added responsibility for a Dalit girl. In her narrative, the importance of community based mentorship is very clear. Such mentorship does not only provide guidance, but also becomes role model (of someone who has gone through the same and is successful, which becomes a great boost)—

“Rejected and deprived life made me realise the importance of education at a very early age. My struggle and determination for education brought me into the

city. I took admission in a college where attendance was not given much importance. I brought my younger siblings in Mumbai for further education as soon as I got a temporary job in Mumbai. By this time, I had realised the importance of English if I have to survive in the competitive city. I took the negative comments, discriminations, and apprehensions in an encouraging way to develop myself. With the help and motivation of a SC teacher, I could learn the language, at least to present myself. Even after a long journey of struggle, commitment and hard work, I felt undesirable and objectionable in college and in work place circles due to my caste.”

Neha shared how the intersection of caste, gender, class and colour juggled her life right from her school days. She shares her understanding of the caste, class dialectical—

“I lived in a Sugar Factory colony near my village. I do not remember any direct confrontation of caste discrimination, but class difference was very visible. It was also obvious that Dalits had low paid jobs because of their caste. Even if there was no direct caste-based discrimination seen, I always had the inferiority complex in me that I belong to a Scheduled Caste. Interestingly, I do not know how that has happened. Since I was ‘ugly’ as compared to girls in my class and the black tone of my skin, I was always ridiculed and ignored. This had a great impact on my life till date. I get very conscious about it and feel low and flawed.”

From the above examples and related sharing, it came to me very clear that Dalit women students are able to negotiate with some of the conventional patriarchal roles and norms to some extent, including age of marriage, dressing, participation in the

decision-making process, choice, assertion of rights, etc. to some extent. However, an in-depth study I needed to explore and capture the gendered nuisances.

Conclusion

The paper tried to bring the subjective understanding of education that is proposed and inspired from Dr B R Ambedkar. It also throws light on how education has proved favourable for the Dalits in achieving economic mobility, in negotiating ways and means for social mobility and identity formation. There have been researches on schools and higher educational institutions separately. However, the above narratives of participants make it very clear that there is a need to draw a link between the experiences of Dalit students in schools and higher education institutions holistically. In schools, caste determines capability and the rank of the students. This influences their participation and visibility in the classroom. The classrooms often replicate the caste mode of habitat through sitting arrangements.

Narratives about schooling experiences clearly have a class bias. Poor and rural Dalit students mostly study in poorly maintained government schools, however, there are many second generation literate urban Dalit students who have a chance of studying in better schools. There have been some researches on Dalit student's experiences in government school, however, there is a need of researches to look at identity formation in elite schools, how much ever less in numbers. The urban space provides some form of anonymity to Dalit students, but at the same time make Dalits students more vulnerable as these schools tends to be in the sense of caste and class.

Given that the pre-dominant spaces in higher education are state created and managed and are under the constitutional obligations

of providing reservations, these spaces become a common space for Dalit students coming from both urban and rural background. Do these differences in schooling create different responses among Dalit students in higher education in terms of identity formation, negotiating discriminatory practices and assertion? This question came while dealing with the narratives of the participants in this paper which need further in-depth exploration.

With the casteist and patriarchal attitude of the Indian society, Dalit women have always been very triply jeopardised. Dalit girls or women students face specific issues such as lack of access, poor infrastructural facilities, gender stereotyping, discriminatory attitudes, stigmatized career options, absence of role models, and less academic leadership. They are also subjected to the discipline, control, regulation, and surveillance of not only state services in the education system but also of their parents.’ add up to a more discriminatory and subjugated positions for them. Hence, identity formation happens all three axis of caste, class and gender.

Reflections:

This ‘symbolic’ or ‘psychological’ violence on the Dalit students permeated deep into both the conscious and the subconscious, instilling a sense of insecurity and inferiority has escaped the attention of many a scholar and remained largely unexplored. Ambedkar viewed Dalits battle for education has become a struggle for individual and collective freedom. There it is a need to have a community mentorship to guide and support our future generation and help in emerging an intellectual class that Babasaheb had dreamt about.

Critical interpretation of the available data views classroom as caste-rooms where even the knowledge is hegemonised on caste basis. This ultimately makes education a mode of reproducing

conservative knowledge that subordinates the Dalits. There is a strong need of constructing an alternative knowledge through epistemic engagements wherein Dalits can relate their identities too. The pedagogies, methodologies, processes that are rooted in humanitarian and egalitarian ideas like what we observe in Ambedkar's writings and speeches, which shows an intrinsic amalgamation of modern rationality, humanity infused with the vernacular and indigenous traditions offered by Buddha. We need to have an alternate structure equal for all. This is only possible when we build separate institutions that will help us to move towards humanity.

At the end, I want to thank Bodhi S.R, Anoop Kumar, RTI, conferences like Nagpur collective, Dalit women speak out that helped me in developing confidence and helping me negotiating my space.

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Politics of Representation of Knowledge, Curriculum and Educational Experiences in Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTADC)

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Abstract

Even as a large number of children continue to be excluded from school; all those who are enrolled in school do no experience education in similar ways with reference to access, educational institutions, family situations, socio-economic background, curriculum/representation and textbooks. This paper attempts to examine the question of representation of language, culture and knowledge that is embedded in the curriculum as experienced by Tribes in TTADC. It assumes curriculum as bulk of knowledge and investigate who does it represents through the educational experiences of the Tribes of Tripura. Their educational experiences include access to formal education and being there. It also includes their experiences in terms of interaction within and outside the classroom, with the curriculum, the authorities, teachers, the examination and morning assembly. Here, I will critically analyse their experiences of inclusion or exclusion of mother-tongue in the school curriculum and by interrogating the representation of knowledge and culture embedded in it and how it shaped their educational experiences.

Introduction

“I wish to speak, read and write in indigenous people’s language like what I would call in my language- Kanborok, Chaborok, Daborok” Boyar

.....even history that I read is only that of Indian history and none of the Tripura history is mentioned in the textbooks”-Nabar

The above statement relates the crux of the study whose expressions testify their affinity towards their mother tongue and their desire to include it in the school curriculum. The present curriculum is being seen as oppressive and having an adverse impact on them. It is naturally desirable that a curriculum be embedded in a socio-cultural context. For a child, if reading depicts merely looking at the words on the printed page and does not involve personal engagement or interpretation, or if text that they are given has little meaning or relevance to their sphere of experience, then the outcome will be a half-baked literacy, which will deprive the learner of genuine intellectual and emotional development. If Krishna Kumar (2011) could understand that “reading is basic to democracy”, then adding to that idea, I would say, reading a curriculum with the representation of indigenous life and culture is also basic to democracy.

This study is significant in the context of educational experiences of indigenous people of Tripura. Their educational experiences are shaped in relations to the social context, ethnic composition and their relations, representation of culture as knowledge and the socio-economic challenges. Since their educational experiences do not represent their life and culture, the children from this community experienced education in the form of discrimination, humiliation, and alienation. How much ever we speak about the access, equity, and quality in education, it will remain incomplete in a state of the diverse ethnic composition without the representation of indigenous people in educational experiences. The educational experiences of indigenous people is not just about curriculum, teacher and student alone, rather how they experience with it. The school rituals and celebration and the representation

of their folktales, indigenous games in existing curriculum are all influenced by the forces of larger socio-economic context.

The school instruction in the language of the dominant culture has become the most vexed issue in Tripura but it has a different facet due to its ethnic composition and relation of different ethnic groups to each other (Barbora, 2002). The composition of different ethnics and their relation to education gives diverse educational experiences to the indigenous people. The indigenous people of Tripura harbour immense enthusiasm for education. But as they grow within the arena of classical¹ type of curriculum, they experience education in an alien form. They have to live with poorly conceive policies which neither assures representation of their own culture, nor do they have relevance to their life in general.

This study is conducted through a case study as a qualitative approach to examine the educational experiences of each respondent. Thus a fair exhaustive study of respondents as to what they do and has been done, what they think they do and have done and what they expect to do and what they ought to do is elicited through the educational life experiences of each respondent through purposeful meaningful sampling technique according to the conveniences of ease to access.

Politico-History of Literacy movement in Tripura (Jana Shiksha Samity)

The Jana Shiksha Movement in Tripura during the regime of Tripura's last king Maharaja Bir Bikram was successful in convincing the Maharaja that his tribal subjects were illiterate and it was a historic necessity to open schools to render education to his subjects in the hills. Honouring the pertinent demands of the leaders of the

¹Traditional form of curriculum which depict only the life and culture of dominant people

movement, the Maharaja established more than 400 primary schools in the hills and the then education minister Mr. Brown executed the Maharaja's order in a suitable manner. Launching Jana Shiksha Movement in the mid- 40s and 60s of the 20th century under the banner of Jana Shiksha Samity really urged on education for the Kokborok speech community living in the hills. The illiterate Kokborok speaking people quench their thirst for education with Bengali, a language alien to them and were disappointed for not being taught in their own mother tongue. The leader of the Jana Shiksha Samity during their movement did not demand for education whose medium of instruction would be Kokborok. They simply demanded education for the illiterate Kokborok people (Indigenous people who speak Kokborok) and thus Bengali decidedly became the medium of instruction for them. The demand for Kokborok as the medium of instruction in schools started getting prominence a little later. This demand was raised when 'Tripura Upajati Juba Samity' (TUJS) was born in the year 1967 and burst out with the slogan "introduce mother tongue Kokborok as a medium of instruction". Among other pragmatic demands for the development of the tribal society, the leaders of the newly born Tribal National Political party spearheaded the issue of medium of instruction in mother tongue through a series of volatile movements and at the same time the Communist parties began to highlight the mother tongue issue and even the Congress party of Tripura did not dare to ignore this volcanic demand and thus the process of introducing Kokborok in primary education finally began (Chaudhury, 2007: 84-5).

Kokborok as medium of instruction

The very need for making the Kokborok language as medium of instruction was first felt by Mr. C.W, Bolton, and the then political agent of the British Govt. working in Tripura in the

later part of the 19th century. He prepared a report on education meant for the Hill Tipperah from 1872 to 1878 and wrote “The Introduction of Education among the Hill Tribes” which is resisted by the indigenous people for two reasons. First, they require the labour of their children either to attend the household work in their absence, or to assist in clearing and cultivating the Jums². Secondly, as they possess no script of their own, they can only be educated through the medium of Bengali, and Bengali teachers do not reside in the hilly places. Mr. Bolton observes that, this difficulty could be overcome by training the tribes in Agartala and sending them to the hills to take part in the educational process. But the objection of the people to relieve their children from work at home or in the Jums might be the reasons for not allowing their children to attend the schools.

The unique and far reaching observation made by Mr. C.W Bolton mentioned two important aspects – first, the Kokborok (Tipperah) speaking people living in hill cultivating Jums for their livelihood were not mentally ready to send their children to school since it hampered their domestic needs. Secondly, the elite class or the Thakur of the Royal dynasty were very much reluctant to abide by the suggestion that the hill brethren, be educated in their mother tongue, so writing the grammar or the textbooks in Kokborok language was out of their dream. Thus Bolton was called the first dreamer of instruction in Kokborok language.(Choudhury, 2007: 81-82).

Govt. Recognition of Kokborok

When the Congress party came to power in 1972 under the leadership of the then Chief Minister Mr. Shukhamoy Sengupta, a historical “tribal language cell” was set up under the Department

²Refer to shifting cultivation in modern term

of Education meant for writing text books in Kokborok language which was to be introduced at the primary level. The motto of the government was to impart some arithmetic and basic knowledge into primary education to the Kokborok speaking students in their mother tongue. To facilitate and meet the expectation, many emerging writing has been initiated by many authors on experimental basis. Among the basic literature was the book written by Ajit Bandho Debbarma, “Kok Borok Swrwngma”. This book was widely accepted by the Kokborok speaking children while it was in circulation. Initiation of education in Kokborok did not make much difference because there was no provision for a systematic examination system for the students at the primary level. But this initiation acted as a prelude to the mother tongue teaching process as a medium of education in a later period (Chaudhury, 2007:85-6).The widely accepted mother-tongue of indigenous people “Kokborok” was notified in the Tripura Gazette by Tripura Legislative Assembly on January 19, 1979 as State Language. But orders have not been issued to provide facilities for instruction through mother tongue according to the agreed scheme of safeguarding for linguistic minorities³. Later on, to represent the mother tongue of indigenous people, Kokborok was taught in schools. Thereafter there was a controversy whether the Kokborok should be taught and written in Roman script or Bengali script. The Kokborok Teachers (KBT) were recruited from the Kokborok speaking people to teach Kokborok as it was the mother tongue of the indigenous people. The KBT has been in dilemma since then pondering whether to teach in Roman script or Bengali script. In course of time KBT taught in the Bengali language due to the unavailability of textbooks publish by the State Council and Educational Research Training (SCERT). As a result, many KBTs taught in Bengali as the medium of instruction

³as on 13th February 2011

in spite of being KBT and their passion to teach in Kokborok was demeaned. Moreover, government recruited KBT from among the non-tribal's community who did not speak the dialect of indigenous people. The Kokborok day is celebrated on 19 January every year to commemorate the recognition of Kokborok by the Government of Tripura as the state language passed by the state assembly on 19th January, 1979.

Governance structure and Education system (TTADC)

The Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAACDC) has been set up under the provision of the sixth Scheduled of the Indian constitution⁴ in order to look after the educational requirement of the tribal's and also needs of the larger section of tribal's in the state. In 1982, the majority of tribal-dominated areas were placed under TTADC. According to this provision, from the year 1986 to 2002, 1374 Government Junior Basic Schools (primary) were transferred under the control of the TTADC. During the period 2003-2004 to 2007-2008, 444 Junior Basic (JB) Schools were upgraded into Senior Basic Schools (Upper Primary). As the council is empowered only to look up to the Junior Basic Schools (Primary), the 444 upgraded Senior Basic Schools were handed over to the state government. During the period 2003-2004 to 2008-2009, 687 more new Primary schools were established in the Autonomous District Council (ADC) area. Besides that, from March 2009, 4 residential schools have been made functional in the tribal area. Presently the TTADC has 1622 Primary schools and one English Medium Residential High school. The ADC has at its helm the Executive Member (Education Department) and the Chief Executive Officer at the head of the administrative hierarchy of ADC. A Principal Officer is in charge of the Education Department

⁴<http://www.destripura.nic.in/ABOUT%20us.pdf>, retrieve on 22/11/10.

who is deputed from the State Government. At the headquarters, there are two Deputies to assist him in the administration of school education. The field level functionaries include Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs), Inspector of Schools (IS) and Deputy Inspector of Schools (DIS)⁵.

Culture, Knowledge, Curriculum and Educational Experiences

A. Politics of representation of language and curriculum-On Controversy of Kokborok

- The curriculum in the state government schools since its inception has introduced Kokborok as one of the language subject. Initially, it was taught as a second language in the schools. But it has not been able to establish its space in all the schools and colleges of the state.
- There is a general agreement now that Kokborok must be taught compulsorily in all the schools and colleges. The Kokborok Teachers (KBT) were recruited by the Government of Tripura in 1980s to teach subjects in Kokborok language in the state run schools. But the Kokborok teacher neither taught in Kokborok nor do they claim to teach in Kokborok.
- There were also absence of textbooks published by the State Council Educational Research and Training (SCERT). Thus the KBT finally remain teaching in Bengali language as in any ordinary Bengali medium schools.
- In due course of time, there was a noticeable change in Kokborok text after the controversy deepened as to whether Kokborok must be written in the Roman script or Bengali script as it does

⁵<http://www.ttaadc.nic.in/departments.htm>, retrieved on 22/11/10.

not have a script of its own. This remains a dilemma with the changes in state government.

- There is also a group of political activists who are in favour of introducing Kokborok in Roman script. Their concern is to enable the Kokborok language to be widely recognised globally through the introduction of Roman script.
- After the introduction of KBK in autonomous schools there arose another issue for the tribal students. A student who acquires education till primary classes in autonomous schools in Kokborok medium found it difficult to adjust in Bengali medium as there were no Kokborok schools after primary classes.
- In a situation like this the introduction of Kokborok still remains a contentious issue regarding in what script it must be written. In whichever script, it would consider, the sole objective was a representation of the life and culture of indigenous people in the school curriculum.
- A similar kind of educational experiences is also shared by some other indigenous people of North-East Hill States. The demand for mother-tongue in the medium of instruction has been noted by an ethnic indigenous community of North Cachar Hills, Assam. In the case of Dimasa community (largely inhabit in North Cachar Hills) as examined by Barbora (2002) from his field work experiences, he writes that though there was a strong lobby from the Dimasa community to introduce Dimasa language at the primary school, the district committee neglected it. Thus Dimasa textbooks for the primary classes are prescribed and published by the Assam Text Book Production and Publication Board. Most of these prescribed textbooks still remain in the Godown without any possible scope to be used by the Dimasa community. Consequently, when the Dimasa

youths demanded for the introduction of Dimasa language in the Primary Schools of North Cachar Hills (N C Hills), the district council later suggested the replacement of Bengali and introduction of English in the Primary school. Later on, non-tribal job seekers who were appointed in the schools neither knew Dimasa nor Bengali (Misra 1990:194, cited in Barbora, 2002). However, till date, most of the State-run Schools still use Bengali as the medium of instruction.

B. Experiences with curriculum: Interrogating whose culture and knowledge?

a. The Medium of Instruction:

- There are prominently two types of school in Tripura, such as missionary school and government-run schools. The former type of school prescribed English as the first language and the later prescribed Bengali as the first language. Both the types of school have a clueless notion of representing the cultures of the tribes.
- There is a visibility of awareness by the Borok peoples for their inclination to include Kokborok as the prescribed language in the present course content. The Kokborok Teachers (KBTs) who are meant to teach Koborok has now become helpless in the initiation of making Kokborok compulsory in the schools.
- Reading, writing and speaking in the sphere of the educational system has not been free from an imposed value on the single section of the people.
- Representation of mother-tongue resemble to the representation of life and culture. The instances of making a common language in the school in order to achieve nationhood have become an instrument for the destruction of the tribal's language, culture

and identity. Loss of language means the loss of systems of knowledge in the existing world.

- The prevalence of visibility of cultural differences between the tribal and the non-tribal construct the artificial imposition of the cultural capital of the Bengali language that is dominant in the forms of knowledge and skills. The school regime, timings, discipline and the prevalence of hierarchy is alien to the tribal children in the socialized world where the individual is respected from the early childhood (Sarangapani 2001) in the tribal's world.

b. Notion on the Bengali language and curriculum

It is examined without denial that Bengali language is considered as the language of the majority in Tripura and the requisite of this language have been felt by the Borok peoples only in relation to the existing market and the emergence of the state function. Boyar examines,

“Bengali language is just for an individual to exist in the local market. All the official records are in English and thus English must be given first priority. For example, when an individual meets the district magistrate (DM) she/he must be able to communicate well in English to explain her/his issues and problems.”- Boyar

This necessity of language is treated as a politico-administrative purpose. There are two reasons that explain why Borok peoples have opposed Bengali as the medium of instruction. Firstly, the issues of Borok peoples are least represented and is not accepted as an apt process of learning. Secondly, the knowledge of Bengali does not position them to meet the state administrative requirement. It is further observed that in a tribal dominated local market the sellers and the traders are the non-tribal and the buyers are tribes.

This reveals the dominant relationship between the Bengalis and the market. Thus the usage of Bengali language is being seen as limited only to the market space.

c. The Folk-tale as Knowledge in Curriculum:

- The folktales of tribes are confined and unique to them. In traditional practices, the alarm of certain important events in the village during the festivals or sudden announcement is traced back from their folktales. For instance, unexpected death occurrence in the village is alarmed by beating a strange drum beats which is commonly understood by all. There is a present general agreement that it is becoming impossible now to identify any new growing generation who could narrate some of the common folktales. Representation of folktales as knowledge in the curriculum is a process to unravel the lost cultures and life and thereby preserved to retain it.
- This detachment of the curriculum and its irrelevancy to their reality provides a reason for their early dropout from the school.

d. The School Uniform

In the pre-1980s 'saree' was prescribed as school uniform for the school going tribal girl children. 'saree' in Tripura portrays the attire of Bengali ethnic. Imposition of 'Saree' as school uniform towards Tribal School going students expressed the idea of universal singularity where indigeneity and identity are ignored. In post 1984 the idea of school uniform has opened up to create a space to accommodate the attire of the tribal's by institutionalizing it. Presently 'rigannai' and 'achhal' is the prescribed uniform for the school going tribal children, unlike non-tribal groups whose uniform remain 'saree'.

e. Festivals Celebrated

- Saraswati Puja is widely celebrated in all the state-run government

schools and they are instructed to mandatorily attend this occasion whereas the widely accepted tribal religion ‘Garia Puja’ is not celebrated in the respective schools as they are celebrated in the village. The idea of the notion of celebration of Saraswati Puja became dialectical to Tribes. Anita said, “I wish to celebrate Garia Puja because I feel it is dear to me and is mine”.

- The celebration of new identities and beliefs come into shape in response to the older cultural identification. School premise is meant to be a place for the academic discourse and learning. Thus domination of religious celebration by a single identity replicates to the singularity of dominance and is a visible insult to another individual being.

Conclusion

Education is intrinsically part of the larger structure and processes in the state context. Its structural location in specific can be identified within the context of knowledge building and enterprise. Its secular and neutral nature can thus be explained only through objective understanding of the epistemological content, context and processes within a socio-political realm. This being the case, education: access, equity, and quality need constant reflection and reorientation taking into consideration the multi-cultural context. In particular, the perspective in this paper positions ‘tribe centric education and pedagogy’. A tribe centric pedagogy engages with a critical understanding of power relations that exhibits imposition of knowledge to the disadvantaged people (also mentioned in Advani 2009). The pedagogical framework of education should be able to unravel the epistemological premise of knowledge building, its ethical and power implication. This legitimacy of knowledge prescription is imposed through certain ideology, aspiration and struggles. As also been stated that “...what counts as legitimate knowledge is the result

of complex power relations and struggles among identifiable class, race, gender, and religious groups” (Apple 1992:4). This legitimate knowledge does not include the historical and cultural expression of people of colour, labour, women and others who have been less powerful (ibid 1992:7). Who then decides the legitimacy of knowledge in a multi-cultural society? In the context of the tribes of Tripura the construction of school knowledge premise must be derived by the tribes themselves. They know their reality better; and they also know to identify what is to be included. As Verrier Elwin, the British Anthropological adviser to the Government of India argued, for a successful attempt on the tribal plan it must be always looking from within the premise of “tribal touch” . The subjective experiences of the tribes are embedded in the symbolic structure in the society which is further determined by the symbolic ignorance of the tribe’s reality. This deculturation (erasure of culture and language), assimilation and policing is a signal of colonial power relations (Carlson 1997:137, as cited in Jain 2008).

While the majority talks about the nation building, there is a need to ponder on the inclusion of self and the identity of the tribes. History acts as a marker for the invisible tribes to assert for their identity and political inclusion. This de-representation of the history of the tribes in the larger social context is a process to marginalise their distinct socio-political. The idea of nations without the idea of inclusion of tribes will alienate them from the nation building. The conflict over text lies in the power relationship among the different ethnic groups (Apple: 1992:5). The text is not neutral, but greatly shaped by the political agenda of the dominant groups. Education, critical pedagogy (Freire 2005) therefore, should be able to argue for the invisible and the weak that often become an object of the institutional processes of the dominant groups of the state.

Scheduled Tribe Children and Their Educational Accessibility: Evidences from Maharashtra School Education

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Abstract

Even after seven decades of independence, tribal education is far from expectation. This paper would like to explore the accessibility of school education to scheduled tribes in the state of Maharashtra with reference to the primary data collected from the students from primary to secondary level. The primary and secondary education is the foundation for the higher education, be it higher secondary which is an entry point for any technical education and/or for university education. It aims to analyse the socio-economic and educational background of the tribal students, environmental condition in the family and neighbourhood, and the facilities and support system available to continue education and their achievements in comparison to non-tribal students.

Key Words: Socio-economic Background, Scheduled Tribe Students, Educational Accessibility, Performance and Participation.

Introduction

Education in India is not widely attained by all (all category/ community people) even after seventy years of independence. The accessibility of Indian education system has limited to some social groups who have been in upper socio-economic and political strata. Indian educational system is largely concerned with the existing formal structure of education and the institutionalised methodology

which imparts knowledge of individuals with an unequal share of accessibility at different levels of education. There is a stark disparity to access education among different social groups of India. Within this unequal system of education many groups and sub-groups are not able to accessing education equally at different level of education; some groups are far away from the other groups or communities. One can conclude from Chitnis (1981) study with reference to the vulnerable groups, that it is a long way to go to attain education for disadvantages groups. It has been argued that some groups require specific attention to access or attain education and come up to the mainstream education. Tribals' are the groups among them who require specific attention for their educational development. The educational ratio of tribals' gives an insight into the regional variation in the relative disparity of tribals' and others in the country. Educational ratio of tribals' or Scheduled Tribes (STs) is very poor compared to the other categories at different levels of education (Deshpande 2001; NCERT nd.; Dreze and Kingdon 2001).

Accessibility of Education

In education, the term 'access' typically refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure—or at least strive to ensure—that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education. Increasing access generally requires schools to provide additional services or remove any actual or potential barriers that might prevent some students from equitable participation in certain courses or academic programs. Factors such as ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, perceived intellectual ability, past academic performance, special-education status, language ability, and family income or educational-attainment levels—in addition to factors such as relative community affluence, geographical location, or school facilities—may contribute to certain students having less

“access” to educational opportunities (opportunity gap) than other students. This would lead to the achievement gap in their academic as well as co-curricular growth.

Accessible education or educational accessibility is the process of designing courses and developing a teaching style to meet the needs of people from different backgrounds, abilities and learning methods. Just as there is no single way to teach, people learn in a variety of ways; using different instructional methods will help to meet the needs of the greatest number of learners. It takes into account a range of student characteristics, including ethnic background, race, abilities, disabilities, age, gender, language abilities and preferred learning style (IAE nd). ‘Accessible and flexible curricula can serve as the “key” for creating “schools for all”’. It is important that the curriculum be flexible enough to provide possibilities for adjustment to individual needs and to stimulate teachers to seek solutions that can be matched with the needs and abilities of each and every pupil’ (UNESCO 2000). The course delivery methods, physical spaces, information resources, technology, personal interactions with students, evaluation and assessment should reach to all backgrounds of the students (IAE nd).

However, in the Indian social system, the Tribals and other scheduled groups have been socio-economically and educationally excluded. The educational enrollment of ST students is very low compared to the other category of students at different levels of education. Except primary level the enrollment of STs is below 10 per cent in all levels. On the other hand, for the others category the percentage of enrollment is 69 per cent at primary level. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of STs is just 53.3 per cent for STs against 69.0 per cent of all categories at secondary education level (Statistics of School Education 2012). Despite many efforts of the government to improve the educational status of STs including other

scheduled categories, the STs still remain backward, underprivileged and deprived of many resources at many places of society (Kijima 2006; Bagai & Nundy 2009).

As participation is an important factor in the education system, the paper highlights the access to the education system through participation. The basic influencing factors related to participation are regularity of teachers, classroom teaching methods, the approachability of the teachers and understanding of subjects by the students. The findings of the participation and access of the students in the education system include the interaction between the students and all the stakeholders and vice-versa. Tribal people do not have to assimilate into anything because they have the sovereign dignity and freedom to adapt to any circumstances that will allow them to fulfil their dreams, aspirations and life pursuits. The method of participation can be achieved by keeping in mind their culture, freedom and sovereignty (Rupavath 2016). Participation is an extreme crucial element of learning. It is a proven fact that students learn better and retain more when they are active participants. Learning is an active process and should involve deliberation. This reflects their involvement in the school and their academic seriousness. But as our education system involves the banking system that speaks about the one-way process. In our system, the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the ‘banking’ concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. Such type of approach leads to lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this system.

Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra

Out of several scheduled tribes, communities in the country, 45 major tribal communities live in Maharashtra. All these tribes are having low economic and social status as compared to other social categories. Population wise Maharashtra has got a second largest ST population at national ST population (Kokate and Solunke 2011). There are 10,510,213 (9.4 per cent of the state population) people reported as STs, of which 5,315,025 (50.57 per cent) males and 5,195,188 (49.43 per cent) females. The growth rate for ST population in the state during 2001-11 is 22.5 per cent, in rural-urban division 20.3 per cent in rural areas and 37.9 per cent in urban areas. Gender wise decadal growth of the ST communities is 22.2 per cent for male and 22.8 per cent for female. Out of the total ST population in Maharashtra 9,006,077 (85.68 per cent) are staying in rural areas of which 4540456 (50.41 per cent) are males and 4465621 (49.59 per cent) are females. On the other hand, the very less percentage of people are staying in a city or urban areas who constitute 1,504,136 (14.32 per cent), of which 774569 (51.49 per cent) are males and 729567 (48.51 per cent) are females. At district level Nandurbar has the highest proportion of ST population with 69.3 per cent, followed by Gadchiroli of 38.7 per cent, Dhule of 31.6 percent and Nashik of 25.6 per cent (Census 2011).

Education of the STs in Maharashtra

Educational status of STs is very low in Maharashtra like most of the other States. Out of the total enrolment, the enrolment of STs is 12.85 per cent whereas it is 72.89 percent for others in primary education. The enrolment of STs at secondary level is reduced to 6.27 per cent when it is increased to 78.99 percent for others. At primary level, the GER for STs is higher than the other category and signifies a larger number of STs are repeated or remained in

primary level as over/under age enrolment. The GER of STs is much lower than the other categories at secondary, higher secondary and a higher level of education which is just 49 per cent for STs against 73.7 per cent of all categories at secondary education level (Statistics of School Education, 2012).

Despite various constitutional provisions still the STs are struggling in their social, economic and educational life in the state and they are facing exploitation at every sphere of life. Including many problems, lack of education is a reason for their exploitation, the language issues are also a barrier in their development at different levels of education. Mainly due to the mother tongue influences they are unable to express their ideas in the state language and another language. One of the arguments is that imparting education to the Gond children in their mother tongue and at the same time familiarizing them with their regional language were subsequently disappointed and it was a difficult task for the teachers to teach every tribes' mother tongue in one classroom (von Furer- Haimendorf 1982).

Similarly, Bhargava (1989) and Kamble (1992) also studied on the educational facilities for weaker sections like STs/SCs. The educational policies and programmes are unable to encompass the complex social reality within a single framework and therefore, the gap between policy and practice remains unbridged. Unlike some of the other state governments, Maharashtra has experimented with partnering with non-government organizations in running tribal schools called Aashram Shalas but the ashram shalas have not been run well in the state (Kalra 2007). To raise the attendance and give English medium education, the state government planned to open English medium schools in all 16 tribal districts of Maharashtra. Of the two lakh tribal students studying in 1100 schools across the state, the government is expecting one lakh students to benefit through

this scheme (DNA 2010; Hindustan Times 2010). In Maharashtra and in few other states Panda (nd.) attempted to understand the challenges the ST children faced for more than six decades. His study mainly focuses to understand some of the disadvantages of the ST children facing in their educational life and was in search of how to bring those STs for holistic and inclusive development.

A study on attendance among children of STs in Nandurbar districts which found factors of non-participation of tribal children at school level. Through this study it was found that the concept of education is not familiar with the students at school level, as the true meaning of education was not understood by the student's as well as parents, the attendance of STs in this district was found very low and the retention of the STs also was poor in the schools of this district. The medium of instruction also played a major role in attendance and retention of school going ST children of this school. As the medium of instruction in schools is Marathi, which is different from tribal dialects like Bhilli, Pawri, most of the tribal students are unable to understand the teaching-learning process in the class. With the one-way communication process, the students are sitting in the class as a passive listener and most of them are either dropped out or not coming regularly to the school. The major hindrance which comes out through this study for the tribal children is the location of the school. The location of schools and the hilly and inaccessible terrain hindered school attendance. Migration is the most pertinent problem, as 40 per cent of the population migrates to Gujarat on a seasonal basis which caused the absenteeism of ST students in school. Apart from these the ST students lack motivation and concentration in the study when school is closed about 5-10 days (except Sundays) in a month as the teachers visit the block office to collect their salaries, attend teachers' meetings, supply school statistics to block

research offices and attend training programmes. So, the primary education of STs in terms of educational accessibility, attendance, and retention in Maharashtra is poor, which needs different policy intervention for their educational development (Chattopadhyay and Durdhawale 2009).

Since independence, the country has moved on addressing various socio-economic and educational needs of citizens and especially for the ST population through its policies and plans. But the above discussion does not give a satisfactory picture though there has been changes in the educational status of STs. Keeping Chitnis's study (1974) as the backdrop, this study aims to revisit and ascertain the educational accessibility of STs at the school level in Maharashtra.

Methodology

This article is part of a larger empirical study on the educational status of STs in Maharashtra. It has used the purposive stratified sampling on the basis of population and literacy. Four (4) districts were selected on the basis of high tribal population and high literacy (Nanadurbar), high population and low literacy (Gadchiroli), low population and high literacy (Pune) and low population and low literacy (Parbhani). In addition, the state capital district (Mumbai) was purposively selected without any choice. The sample size for this study is 1080 of which 540 are from upper primary and 540 are from secondary education level. Again the sample size is distributed with the ratio of 3:1 of ST and other students. Thus, there are 405 ST students and 135 Other (Non-ST) students at each level of education. Sixth (VI) and Ninth (IX) classes were chosen to collect the data at upper primary and secondary level respectively. Thus 810 ST and 270 other students have been selected purposively with their availability. The major tool for this

study was interview schedule and students were the primary source for the data collection. The data were collected separately from the ST and Other categories (non-ST/SC) students from upper primary and secondary level of education. The descriptive statistics have also been used to analyse the data comparing between ST and non- ST students to ascertain the accessibility of school education. The key variables are on the responses of the students on their family condition, social capital in the community and the access and participation in curricular and co-curricular activities in the school.

Family Background

Simpson and Fiedler (1989) have identified four basic parental roles - parents as educational decision makers; parents as parents; parents as teachers and parents as advocates. The family background has implication on these parental roles which contribute the accessibility of tribal students in primary/secondary education. The family background certainly is an immediate environment with which the students interact and thus contributes either positively or negatively on access to education.

Parents' positive attitude towards child's education is important in determining school attendance and academic achievement of the child. The socio-economic status of the parents can have an impact on the education of their children. A child, brought up with affection and care in the least restrictive environment would be able to cope up better with the sighted world. Therefore, the family shapes the social integration of the child more than a formal school. Since the parent's attitude is so important, it is essential that the home and school work closely together.

Residence of Parents: Residential patterns reflect on the school choice (Douglas Lee Lauen, 2007) for the children to continue or drop out from the education system. Because in the

urban context we find various kinds of institutions which can easily be accessed to higher education. In the urban context multiple options could be available for the students. But in the rural areas, one cannot locate multiple options for the students to select the schools based on the choice.

Most of the parents (73%) live in the villages and some (27%) live in the towns/cities irrespective of the social categories (See Figure No.1). As Douglas (2007) says that due to the flexibility of the residence settlement, there are push and pull factors which determines the decision making. He argues that the socio-economic and the residence may have a greater influence on the school choice by the parents.

Educational status of the head of households: The educational status of the head of household may provide foundation to aspiration for the children. It shows that large percentages of them belong to primary (32%) and secondary (26%) level of education. A large percentage of them are illiterates. So for many of the students it is the first generation of education. As the level of education increases the percentage decreases. But within the social categories, tribal students have more illiterate heads of the households compared to the non-tribals. Among the tribals' larger percentage of heads of the households have the primary level of education, whereas for other households it is the secondary level of education. therefore, among the tribals illiteracy or the primary level of education is more than the others. The decline is more among tribals compared to others as the level of education increases, though there are heads who are graduates and post-graduates also among both the social categories (See Figure No.2).

Primary Occupation of the Head of the Households: The traditional occupation of most of the households has been agriculture. Therefore, the main occupation of most of the head of

the households is cultivation (37%), wage labour (20%), service (23%) and business (11%). While most of Tribal household heads are into cultivation (41%) and wage labour (22%), they are also into service (21%) and business (8%). The other household heads are more into service (30%) and business (19%) though they are also into cultivation (28%) and wage labour (14%) as their primary occupation (See Figure No.3). The education may have an impact on their occupation to some extent, the occupation certainly has implication on their economic status of the household. A large percentage of the households have BPL ration cards (52%) while only 35% of them have APL ration cards. There are a few households who are likely to have Aatodaya card and some even do not have either of these ration card which determines the entitlements. Among tribal households most of the households (56%) have the BPL card though some have APL (35%) card whereas among others, most of them have the APL(47%) card which is just the opposite of tribal households (See Figure No.4). This would indicate the socio-economic status of the households.

Housing condition: Housing condition is one of the very important factors affecting the education of the children. It has been found that about 43% of tribal households have a pucca house, whereas about 63% of the non-tribal households have the same. A large percentage of the tribal households have either semi-pucca or kutcha house compared to the non-tribal households. Some of them even live in huts. Many (22%) of the households have one room house despite having a housing programme for the poor in the country for decades like Indira Awas Yojana and so on. In such situation one cannot expect them to do well in their studies. However, a large percentage of them have 2-3 room houses. One cannot expect to have room/ space for study in a one room house or even in case of house with 2-3 rooms (See Figure No.5). Therefore

a large percentage (78%) of the students belonging to both the social categories do not have a separate room for studies at home (See Figure No.6). Almost all (97%) of the non-tribal households have electricity at home, while there is a lesser percentage (89%) of tribal households have it (See Figure No.7).

Though English language is not an absolute indicator to measure knowledge and ability of a student, an English speaking person in the family or neighbourhood may motivate in studies. It is found that about 35% of the tribal households have an English speaking person in the family, whereas, it is 50% in the non-tribal households. Similarly, the same percentage (23%) of households among tribes and non-tribes have some close relatives in government service. There have been the college level educated person/s around them among both the communities. But these educated individuals within their own tribe/community are more among tribals than non-tribals, whereas in the non-tribals it is other community members who are college educated in their neighbourhood (See Figure No.8).

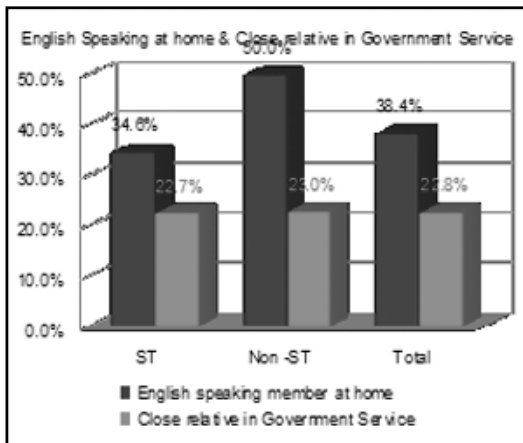


Figure: English Speaking at Home and Close Relative in Government Service

There are English speaking persons, college educated and government servants in the neighbourhood. They serve as social as well as economic capital in the neighbourhood. However, only 47% of the students seek guidance from such educated neighbours. The non-tribals (53%) are more pro-active and forthcoming to seek guidance for education from these educated persons than the tribal students (45%) (See Figure No.9).

“It takes a village to raise a child” is a popular proverb with a clear message: the whole community has an essential role to play in the growth and development of its young people. In addition to the vital role that parents and family members play in a child’s education, the broader community too has a responsibility to assure high-quality education for all students (Roekel, 2008).

Needed Support

	Financial		Academic/ Educational		Encouragement/Moral & Psychological		Financial/ Encouragement/ Moral & Psychological	
	Tribal	Non-Tribal	Tribal	Non-Tribal	Tribal	Non-Tribal	Tribal	Non-Tribal
First	Father	Father	Teacher	Teacher	Uncle	Uncle	Mother	Mother
Second	Mother	Mother	Neighbour	Brother/ Sister	Teacher	Teacher	Father	Father
Third	Grand Parents/ Uncle	Grand Parents/ Uncle	Brother/ Sister	Neighbour	Neighbour	Neighbour	Grand Parents	Grand Parents

The students are mostly in need of financial, educational, academic encouragement/moral and psychological support in the course of their studies. The matrix shows the sources for different needs in terms of their choice/preference. The family members especially parents alongwith grandparents, are the support for their

financial and emotional need. The teachers and neighbours also provide the emotional support. But for their academic/educational need they go to teachers, brothers/sisters and neighbours. Across the social categories the sources of the support and in their preferences are almost the same.

Access to the School

In the state of Maharashtra, there are multiple agencies running educational institutions. The public schools are run by the Zilla Parishad, Ashram schools by Department of Tribal Development. Many schools are run by the NGOs/Societies with the financial support of Department of Tribal Development schools and Social Justice and Empowerment. The third category is private schools without any state support. There are about 1100 Ashram schools run and supported by the Department of Tribal Development in Maharashtra, where about 4.5 lakh children have been studying according to the report of TISS (2016). As the ashram schools provide the free education with residence facilities which takes care of their stay, food, uniform and the books and stationeries for the tribal children most of the tribal parents from the far away villages prefer to send their children to these schools for education due to their financial and other support constraints. It has been found that the students are studying in three types of schools viz: public, private-aided and private- unaided schools.

As most of the parents live in rural areas, a significant percentage (26%) of the students stay in the hostel and some (6%) of them stay with the relatives/others for the studies. Within the social categories, only 19% of the non-tribal students stay away from parents while about 37% of the tribals' stay in the hostels/ with relatives for studies (See Figure No.10).

However, the findings of the TISS (2016) study show that

much is lacking where the educational facilities for tribal populations are concerned. Though 16% (174) schools have scored as very good, many of the other schools do not meet the infrastructural requirements like the amount of land (minimum 2 hecter), classroom space, Office for the Head Master, staff room, storage room, kitchen, dining room, sick room, lights and fans etc. Similarly, the living space and provisions like bedding/mattresses, poorly maintained rooms with broken doors and windows in many cases are the serious concerns. There are many school hostels the students have to go out for defecations and taking bath as there are unusable toilets and bath rooms are not available. The school and hostel surroundings are also not cleaned or not so cleaned. This can cause for the breeding ground for malaria and many other illnesses. These conditions lead to poor health and hygiene of the residents. The girl students are prone to poor reproductive health care with poor monitoring of menstrual cycle and provision for sanitary napkins. Though lunch is provided as per the norms, hardly the hostels provide breakfast despite having the provision for it. This can affect the nutritional status of the students. The unhygienic living condition draws attention for improving the living condition and the proper health care services as many children have been dying mostly from illnesses.

Safety and security is also a concern as many of the schools are with no boundary wall and no security guards. Many of the wardens posts are vacant and so the some of the staff is given additional responsibility sometimes. Without the basic living condition, one cannot expect the quality education to be delivered, though the curriculum and pedagogy are other crucial elements in imparting education to tribal communities. The poor condition of the Ashram schools is an injustice to the young tribal boys and girls, violation of Right to education, disrespect to human dignity.

The objective of the Ashram school is not met in the true sense.

The Honourable Supreme Court's hearing on public interest litigation against the Andhra Pradesh government on May 9, 2014 said that: "Separate toilets for girls and boys as well as availability of water are essential for basic human rights that enhance the atmosphere where the education is imparted. It can also be put in the compartment of basic needs and requirements in schools" (Suchitra 2014). The court made it clear that these facilities were integral to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Therefore, the existing poor condition on toilets and provision of water for drinking and washing/bathing for the students in the ashram schools would mean failure to ensure basic amenities in the schools by the state as well as other agencies running the schools and violation of the RTE Act.

The declining trend on the enrolment in public schools and the increasing enrolment in the private or semi-private schools is a common concern. However, it is the reality that more and more parents would like to send their children to private schools. It has affirmed this changing school choice. However, between the tribal and non-tribal it is found that still a significant percentage (37%) of the tribal parents choose to send their children to public school, whereas some of parents of non-tribal student have chosen to send their children to public schools (See Figure No.11). Most of the students irrespective of social categories expressed that they did not have a problem in getting admission except a few who had problems like in submission of necessary certificates, financial problem, and lack of seats.

Sitting arrangements: The seating arrangements do have an impact on the learning processes. The students sitting in the first rows are likely to be more attentive and also generally answer

the question asked in the class than those sitting in the back. In the study, about one third (32%) of the students sit in first row, whereas they find a few (7%) of the students in their respective communities sit in the first row (See Figure No.12). A large percentage of them (53%) have said that teachers decide the seating arrangement though many of them also choose the place themselves (See Figure No.13). Similarly, the schools have many provisions like a library, computer to facilitate/improve the knowledge of the students. But the data showed that more than half of the students use the computer (61%) and library (53%) but comparatively non-tribal students access them more than the tribal students. Most of the library visitors read story books/novels and then course materials in the library (See Figure No.14).

Though mid-day meal does not contribute directly to the academic aspect of education, it certainly contributes indirectly. Many times it becomes an attraction for the day scholars. Mid-day meal is not only the supplementary nutrition for the children, but also a space of socialisation in the schools where they share a common food, common space and some time share the responsibilities like serving food in turn across social groups. Most of the children in the Upper primary level are served MDM while the students from secondary education do not get MDM.

Curricular Participation of the students

The participation reflects the accessibility of education system of the students. The participation in the classroom leads to the involvement in the system. It also reflects the attachment with the school and the education system. The quality of involvement in the class by the students can be accessed through the quantity and quality of the questions and answers by the students. The effects of the opposition to banking system can be found out through this

method of participation. The percentage of raising questions in the class by the students increases with the increase in the standard of education (Rupavath, 2016).

Studies conducted by TISS in (2016) suggest that many Ashram schools do not have a blackboard in the classroom while maps and charts were missing as well along with the proper lights and fans in each classroom. This can have an implication on the teaching and learning processes in the schools. It has been observed that about 58% of the students' irrespective social categories find difficulties in understanding classroom teaching mostly in the language subject followed by maths. It shows that more ST students are facing problem to understand the classroom teaching than other students. However, about 42% of the students do not find it difficult in classroom teaching (See Figure No.15).

About 81% of the students ask questions in the class to clarify their doubts. Across the social categories it is observed that 78% of the tribal students ask questions, whereas 89% of the Non-Tribal students ask questions in the class for clarifications (See Figure No.16). Similarly, when the teacher asks questions to the students most of the students (95.5%) answer while a few students (4.5%) do not answer questions as they do not know the answer. The tribal students feel so more (5%) than the other students (3%) (See Figure No.17).

Guidance and Advice seeking from Teachers

Teachers are one of the important sources of academic as well as psychological and motivational support. Teacher motivation contributes more to teaching – learning process than teacher competence. Thus, 40% of the students who seek guidance and advice from teachers quite often, whereas 45% of them go to them sometimes and 15% of them never go to the teachers for any advice

or guidance. Across the social categories the non-tribal students seek guidance more than Tribal students, whereas most of tribal students go sometimes to the teachers. As the students are scared and they feel that teachers may not hear them. This depends on multiple factors which have two sides. On one side the students' confidence and comfort to use a language to articulate, comfort to ask and/or share the difficulties; on the other hand the teachers' openness, patience and caring nature would make feel good for the children/students to seek guidance/advice (See Figure No.18).

Today tuition has become so common in schools that if a child does not go to tuition it would be considered something is wrong. As many students find difficult to understand in the class, it would be advisable to have remedial classes rather than to look for tuition class which has huge financial implication. There are 26% of the students going for private tuition. It is observed that most of the non-ST students (42%) go for it while just 20% of Tribal students go for private tuition (See Annexure Figure No.19). The parents living in urban areas and with economically capable to pay for tuition fee send their children for tuition. In the rural areas and especially the tribal parents with low income neither can afford not spare the children for tuition as it has economic implications. The average time spent daily on different activities shows that the tribal students spend 3.76 hours on studies whereas the non- tribal students spend 3.02 hours. Similarly, when the tribal students spend 2.24 hours on household work, others spend 2.35 hours. So the students spend more time on studies than household work as well as other work (See Figure No.20). All the efforts in and outside the classroom for the studies culminate in their annual examination. The performance in the previous year's annual examination shows that a large percentage of the students passed in the 2nd division though 2nd largest percentage in 1st division.

Across the social categories, non-ST students have done better in their annual examination than the ST students (See Figure No.21).

The education is not only the curricular aspects; but also the extra-curricular aspects also for the holistic development of the students. Co-curricular activities are extremely important for the holistic development of the students such as games and sports, socio-cultural activities. If they are encouraged to play games that do not require expensive equipment which cultivate sportsmanship and camaraderie, that is, games such as kho-kho, kabaddi, etc., the tribal students can really excel and may go ahead to participate in state, national and international level competitions. This small step may play a vital role in promoting the physical, mental and emotional health of the students (Jojo, 2013).

It was found that about 25% of the students get to take the leadership roles in different activities like house captain, captain in the sports. However, the other (Non-Tribal) students get more opportunity than the tribal students. Hardly the schools have a picnic/study tour for students (See Figure No.22).

Aspiration of the Students

Most of the students (50%) were found still not clear about their aspirations in studies. Hence, some of them expressed that it would depend on the parents and/or the family members. The percentage of ST students were found to be more than other social category students with lack of clarity on their aspiration. However, there were students with the aspiration of studying Engineering, Medicine, Graduate and Post-graduate level and even MPhil/PhD across the social categories. The higher percentages of ST students lack clarity in their future, a lesser percentage of these social category students could articulate about their aspirations for higher studies than the non-tribal students. Nevertheless, many of the ST

students showed aspiration to go for higher studies. In response to the question on what would they like to become in life, it was found that most of them would like to work in a government department as government servants, join the police force and teachership is the most preferred job among the students especially among the ST students. It may be noted that there are some of the unconventional professions they expressed as their aspiration like to be an interior designer, painter, sports coach, artist, journalist, filmmaker across the social category.

Though significant percentage (42%) of ST students thinks that other students know about their social identity, just a few (2.2%) feel it makes a difference in their behaviour towards them. A large percentage of them do not respond to this question while many of them feel it does not make any difference (See Figure No.23). It could be true to an extent as there is hardly any discrimination on the basis of social identity to take water or use the toilets in the school. The students say that the cleaning of the toilets and the classrooms is mostly done by the staff, still some students from both the social categories say that it is done by the students in group by rotation.

Feeling of Humiliation and Insecure: The way discrimination can be visible with SC students may not be in the same to ST students. The discrimination with tribals may be practiced in terms of inferiorisation and humiliation which are invisible. One would be able to observe or experience in their interaction process. The Figure No. 24 shows the responses of ST students who have felt the expression of teachers and the non-tribal classmates, which implies- “You do not have the ability to study”; “their (tribal) community does not understand the value of education” and also “they (tribals) do not deserve to be educated”. There are teachers and the non-tribal students who communicate these kind of demeaning

messages in their behaviour towards the tribal students. These kind of experiences adds to low self-confidence and humiliation to the tribal students.

Salunkhe Committee report on the issue of deaths in Ashram schools to the Maharashtra Governor which noted that an alarming 1,077 deaths had transpired in 15 years at the tribal schools, 493 of them were girls. Sexual assaults, suicide, lack of medical help, malnutrition and negligence were cited as major causes of the deaths. “In 67 percent cases, there was no proper mention of the cause of death in the death certificates,” states the report, adding that schools could not produce any data regarding 12 percent deaths while vague descriptions like “unknown cause”, “severe illness” and “sudden death” were the other reasons. “We had a feeling that the girls were being sexually exploited, but it was obvious they were under pressure from teachers and the management and would not open up to us,” Salunkhe had reportedly said. “Since death certificates in most cases were vague, missing most crucial details, the reason of their deaths cannot be ascertained. Sexual exploitation angle cannot be ruled out”(First post, September 25, 2017). This is an alarming situation. The cases of deaths and abuse increase the feeling of insecurity both by the students and the parents.

Conclusion: Accessibility of school education to the Scheduled Tribe students in Maharashtra is very minimal as the MHRD data reveal in enrolment and GER defined at State level. One could see that there has been an increase in the rate of literacy, GER among the tribes over the years. However, when it is looked at in relation to other social categories the picture is dismal as the education has been implemented mostly from the functionalist perspective to universalise the primary education and integrate the tribes into the mainstream. The conclusion Chitnis (1981) saying “there is a long way to go to attain or access education for disadvantages groups” is

still relevant. The empirical data of this study concludes that most of the ST students in Maharashtra are with poor socio-economic and educational context which coincide with poor access, participation in curricular, extra-curricular activities compared to other social category students. The “context”– the historical, cultural and environmental factors, both at home and in the schools of the students are hardly taken into consideration for the tribal education. The curriculum and pedagogy evolving from the context could prevent stagnation and drop out of the tribal students. However, that has remained far from satisfaction in our educational policies and programmes. This could be attributed to the “system” which does not recognise the “structures”, that is founded on “perspectives” which are not sensitive to the “context” of the tribes.

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Historicising Tribal Education: Politics, Policy and Processes

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Abstract

Tribal education is a product of colonial historiography. Initially, the agenda for tribal education was imposed upon the colonial project of the Company, which eventually turned into an organized state response towards modernity, development and national integration in the post-colonial period. At the ground level, the work was spearheaded by the charity/voluntary spirit and private institutions through the grand-in-aids within the welfare framework. Over the years, there has been gradual shift of this welfare commitment towards rights and justice. Along with it, there is a likelihood of the greater role played by the private/business institutions. In this backdrop, it has become pertinent to redefine education to include children belonging to Tribe/Adivasis. This is directly connected to the Constitutional commitment for inclusive education.

Ideas, People and Education: A Theoretical Framework

As observed in mainstream theory of education, the idea of education widened to include aspects of social, political and experience in the 19th century. John Dewey (1916) and Lev Vygotsky made important contribution in which social and experiential learning became very important. The general understanding about the education began to emerge with respect to social context, as rooted in the structural functionalist paradigm which fundamentally

establishes the intricate relationship that exists between education and democracy, education and society, individual and society. This approach conceives education as a means for social integration by instilling sentiments, ideas and tendencies that sustain group life. It moved away from an individual and the cognitive development focus to the social environment. It invariably refers to the role that it plays for the good of self and society. However, in structural and political sense, this role can be broadly classified into two, namely, a) as a process that reproduces cultures of domination from time to time and b) as a process that resists structural and cultural domination. Both of these processes are interlinked. In particular, the latter can be generally referred to a critical and political. This approach questions and moves beyond the role of education for social solidarity and equilibrium. The political aspect attached to education instrumented the cultural domination. This approach assumes education as a process against structural and cultural assimilation with the domination by the lower and marginalized sections of the society. The 'State Apparatus' by Althusser (1972) and 'Cultural Capital' by Bourdieu (1977) are the examples which describe the process of cultural reproduction and hegemony through educational institutions. In particular, 'The Pedagogy of the Oppressed' by Freire (1972), 'Alternative Schooling' by Ivan Illich (Bhatia and Bhatia 1997, p. 306-316), 'Invisible Pedagogy' by Bernstein (1997), 'Hidden Curriculum' by Apple (1995) and 'Pedagogy of the Opposition' by Henry Giroux (1983) is critical theoretical perspectives on education and its process in society. Besides, Illich's De-schooling Society (1971) which critiques the existing institutionalized system of education as being ineffective is another example in point.

In this backdrop, education is conceived as a process (more than a mere tool) for the upliftment of people and the region where

there is social discrimination, poverty and marginalization. In such context, education actually becomes a very important aspect of social empowerment, especially of the weaker sections such as women, the disabled, and other socially marginalized groups of the society. In this context, education is envisioned to generate social mobility, development and empowerment. Therefore, the domain of education is dynamic and complex closely related to social, economic and political structures of a human society.

In this approach, education has to be informed by the local context. For example, the context of India and/or South Asia represents a typical context where there has been a history of colonialism, girl child and caste discrimination. In such contexts, education becomes an emancipatory project for fighting against girl child and caste-based oppressed communities. This happened in the context where the earliest societal indigenous education systems such as Tols/Pathshalas and Madrasas were exclusively meant only for the upper caste of the society. These learning institutions were local based which imparted socio-religious education to persons through vernacular; Sanskrit in the former and Arabic and Persian in the latter. Such schooling systems were established for a certain section of society, particularly excluding the lower sections. In such background, modern education system was different which introduced mass education to some extent. Towards this, the idea and work of Jyotiroa Phule, Savitribai Phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar stood out as a valuable contribution in education; a way of understanding education in caste based social context. They gave a new perspective to education in the context of India. They advocated equality in education for all. They are pioneers in the cause for equality through education beginning from the Maharashtra context within the South Asian region. This thinking challenges the dominant idea of education and indicated important aspects of how education can

become the tool for further exploitation and establishment of the status quo in the society in the interest of the powerful.

Noteworthy, indigenous educational structures are evident in the villages of the ethnic groups such as tribes and adivasi's where education is foundational and constitutive of the tribal village. It is the formative foundation of their existences, embedded socially, further defining and negotiating their world view and daily life experience. The village based learning institutions are living examples of how children learn and grow in their worldview, knowledge, customs, traditions, values, socialization and working skills for daily living. This underscores the importance of indigenous perspectives of education. Semali and Kincheloe (1999), Tripura (2014), Kundu (2003), Dhebar Commission (1961) and Xaxa Report (2014) give us indications towards this. The studies underscore that in the indigenous context, where there has been a history of colonization, education was used as an important means to capture indigenous people, their land and resources. Schools became institutions for dismantling the culture and identity of the indigenous and tribal people. Education became an engine to push the traditional or the tribal societies as people who needed to be civilized and tamed for the colonial and imperial project of resource exploitation in the region. Today, such contexts define education in a very different light. It conceives education as a project of decolonization and freedom from exploitation. It is an epistemological struggle for the reclamation and protection of people and lives.

State and Schooling History

Pre Independence: The idea of formal education which is generally referred to as the modern education in the Indian context has its root to the British company's education system since the Charter Act of 1813. In this Act, the British Parliament

directed the British East India Company to take responsibility of education. This raised the social responsibility of the Company. It was a new responsibility that had major implication on their business endeavor and administration. It immediately generated debate around it. In particular, it raised concerns about the nature, system of education and funding. It became imperative to define the aim and purpose of education within the administrative and business policy of the Company. In this endeavor, two important approaches could be observed during this time a) universal primary education, mass education and b) downward filtration theory. The former is the idea laid out in William Adams Third Report, 1938. This approach considered the importance of building a system of education taking into consideration the local, indigenous systems of education. However, the Macaulay Policy of education, 1835 was not in favour of indigenous or the oriental system of education. Macaulay policy established the importance of English education. This policy introduced, for the first time, English education or the western education in the Indian context. Within the colonial frame of traditional versus modernity; English education became colonial state building project where the idea of education was limited to states' institution for training the bureaucratic professionals for the state became actively debated within the Government of Company. However, this was soon rejected so as to build a conducive political environment. In particular, by Charles Wood Dispatch 1854, company's role on education became clearer, as it became a policy to establish department of public instruction in all the five provinces of the Company. The Dispatch rejected the downward filtration theory of Macaulay and recommended that vernacular or modern Indian Languages were to be the medium of instruction in the schools. Indigenous schools were included and grant-in-aid was established for the provincial governments. It also supported

missionary schools and private schools through grant-in-aid. In fact, this was further reaffirmed in Lord Stanley Dispatch 1859 (Roy, 2005, p.22-23). By this time, British Crown has taken over the government. This Dispatch recommended that government schools should take the main role in spreading mass education. It also established local taxes, particularly on land to be collected to meet the needs of education. The Dispatch 1859 in particular, shaped education as a state response to the emerging national feeling in the region. Following this event, the Indian Education Commission of 1882 (Hunter Education Commission) made elementary education as the policy of the state. Some aspects as cited in Roy (2005, p 23-24) are;

- i) Primary education regarded as the instruction of the masses through vernacular in such subjects as will fit them for their position in life and not be necessarily regarded as leading up to the university.
- ii) Selection of persons to fill the lowest offices under the government would give preference to candidates who can read and write.
- iii) The state should devote itself to the spread of elementary education.
- iv) Primary education be extended in backward districts, especially in those areas which were inhabited by the “aboriginal races” (tribes) by extending grants-in-aid to those who were willing to maintain them.

Since, this policy, Primary Education became the responsibility of the districts and municipalities. Therefore, the Commission established the importance of education for individual as well as social development. It became the root of Modern Education System of India in general as it laid emphasis on primary education in

terms of policy, finance, legislation and administration, incorporation of indigenous schools in the official system of education and the curriculum content of schools. With regard to financing, it recommended that separate amount of money should be sanctioned for primary education in the municipal areas and rural areas so that fund meant for the latter will not be utilised for the development of the former. The Government was mandated to assist in bearing the local funds for the primary education through a suitable grant-in-aid. The Commission recommended that the legislation and administration of primary schools should be handed over to the district and municipal boards. Flexibility should be maintained while modifying the school curriculum, working hours in a day and in the structure of the academic calendar as best suited to the context where it is to be followed. Managers should be allowed to select textbooks of their choice to be taught in their schools (Khanna et.al, 1992:66). Another important event in the evolution of primary education in India dates back to 12th March, 1911, when for the first time, a Bill was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Council under the leadership of Gopal Krishna Gokhale. The Bill aimed at making primary education free and compulsory in areas where at least 35 % of the boys and girls of 6 to 10 years were being enrolled and that the defaulting parents/guardians should be penalised for not sending their wards to recognised primary schools. The educational expenditure was to be borne by both the local bodies and provincial government. The local bodies were authorised to levy taxes to meet the cost of this free education. Though the Bill was rejected, the Government came up with a new educational policy in 1913 (Aggarwal, 1984:33-40 and Khanna et.al, 1992:66). In 1929, Hartog Committee, which was appointed as a support to the Statutory Commission to study the education position of the country released that there was a huge gap between the increased

number of primary schools (input) and the attainment of expected literacy rate (outcome). It pointed out a high prevalence of wastage (dropping out of children at any stage before completing primary education) and stagnation (being detained in the same class for more than a year) and recommended bringing up the primary education for democracy; a focus on qualitative improvement rather on increasing the number of schools. Some of its important recommendations include

- a) making primary education (to be four years) compulsory by advocating a stronger policy,
- b) making the curriculum more liberal and scientific, and
- c) developing that in accordance with the school environment and daily experiences of the pupils.

It was envisioned that primary schools should also serve as the important centres for rural development, adult and mass literacy, health care, sanitation and recreation. The standard of service conditions and salary of the primary school teachers should be improved and the number of supervisors in such schools should be increased to achieve adequate performance. In 1937, the Abbot-Wood Committee and Zakir Hussain Commission (1939) were set up under the leadership of the Congress Government. The Commissions prioritised activity and child-centred primary education based on children's interests rather than on bookish learning. This task should be done by well-trained teachers, preferably women teachers who have undergone three years of pre-service training (Khanna S.D. et. al, 1992:72-73). Zakir Hussain (inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's ideology) gave a comprehensive report which considers primary education as an affordable and need-based education (Agarwal, 1984:51). The report advocated primary education as a self-supporting means and gave emphasis on developing craft-centred skills. In 1944, Sargent Plan's Report given by the C.A.B.E. (Central

Advisory Board of Education set up by the Government of India) set a target of universal compulsory primary education within a period forty years for children in the age group of 6 to 14 years (Agarwal, 1984:58, Raj, 1984:162 and Khanna et.al, 1992:75).

Post-Independence - In post-independence period, the role of the state on education got stated and reaffirmed in the Constitution. Education became an important aspect of the poverty alleviation project of the country since 1950s. It aimed at reduction of inequality among people in the country. Education occupied an important role in the imagination of the social and state building processes. It envisioned to train and educate individuals and groups especially, the marginalised towards social development and empowerment within the premise of change and social transformation. It was designed to supply the essential manpower required for various tasks in different fields of human development. Under the Kothari Committee Report 1964-66, National Education Policy 1968 was arrived at. The policy established the purpose and the system of education within the national integration and development. In particular, education was defined as “an investment on human resource development” in the New Education Policy 1986. As observed, there had been a concern for the quality improvement of education at all levels for human development with a vital emphasis on the expenditure particularly in this sector. This had occupied major space in successive five years plans since the first five-year plan. Ramamurti Report, 7th May, 1990 (a review committee on NPE, 1986 appointed by the then governing power/party National Front/Janata Dal headed by Acharya Ramamurti) entitled, “Towards an Enlightened and Humane Society” succinctly flags the main purpose of education stating;

“To bring about genuinely an egalitarian and secular society through maintenance of equity and equality in education among deprived sections of the society like backward

classes, minorities and women both as a right and also a means of social transformation with enlightenment and a sense of humanity. Education, being the basic need of human development should be ensured to all by eradication of the prevailing casteism, communalism and obscurantism in our institutions. Work orientation in education is another concern. In short, educational equity and decentralisation of its management at all levels through social justice, establishment of participative educational order and work empowerment, inculcation of necessary values to achieve Enlightened and Humane Society.”

Some of the important Constitutional Provisions for the Scheduled Tribes are stated below;

- i) Article 15 (4)—empowers the state to make special educational provisions for the SCs/STs and other weaker sections.
- ii) Article 29 and Article 29 (1)—ensures preservation of the distinct languages, cultural and educational rights to all the citizens
- iii) Article 30—promises the right of the minorities to establish and administer educational institutions
- iv) Article 35 (a)—emphasises instruction in mother-tongue at primary stages
- v) Article 45—ensures free and compulsory education for children up to the age of 14 years (93rd Amendment Bill, 2001 has been passed for fundamental right to education; Article 45 has now been backed up by Article 21 (a), which has reduced Article 45)
- vi) Article 46—ensures the promotion of educational and economic interests and protection against social injustice

and all forms of exploitation of the Scheduled Tribes/ Scheduled Castes and other weaker sections of the society.

As inferred from the above, the constitutional commitment of providing this basic educational right for all the children was previously covered under the Directive Principles of State Policy meaning it was non-enforceable in any court of law. This has now become a fundamental right by inserting Article 21 (A)–enforceable in any court of law under the 86th Amendment Act of the Constitution in 2001. This finally led to the Right to Education Act, 2009.

The commitment of the Constitution is also reflected in the planned development process which strongly considered primary education as an important sector of the country's development. It was the Secondary Education Commission, 1952 that gave full emphasis on primary education after independence. The recommendations of the Commission found space in the first five-year plan (1951-56). Since then, the role of the state to recognize and develop primary education in a systematic manner became vital in the country. For instance, the first three five-year plans (1951-1966) showed focus on reconstruction and expansion of the system. Tribal and backward areas began to emerge within the plan during the successive years.

In 1957, the Planning Commission suggested two phases in its endeavour to achieve the targeted eight years of free and compulsory education for all the children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. The first phase aimed at five years' course of primary education for children between the ages 6 and 11 years to be achieved by the end of third five-year plan (1961-66). The second phase set a target of three years' course of primary education for children between the ages 11 and 14 years to be achieved by the end of fifth five-year plan (1974-79). However, after ten years of independence, the inability to achieve the target was first realised

and since then, the targeted years to achieve the same have been extended from time to time as a policy evolution. In line with this effort, various commissions and committees were appointed from time to time to review study and submit the reports on the education scenario of the country. Based on these findings, the educational policies and practices have changed drastically by the time, resulting from the necessary modifications. For instance, with the establishment of the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) in September 1961 and State Councils of Education Research and Training (SCERTs) during 1970s as apex bodies to bring about improvement in education at the national and state levels, respectively, the need for a third tier training institute as a supporting centre at the district level was highly felt in order to improve the quality of basic education. With this aim in view, District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) were set up in almost all the districts of all the states in the country under the NPE, 1986. During 1964-66, Kothari Commission was instituted to study the problems, further it recommended the target of free and compulsory education for all by 1975-76. By this time, expansion in terms of both quality and quantity was realised (Ramanathan, 1965:177-78 and Agarwal, 2002:402). In 1968, during Indira Gandhi's Prime Ministership, the National Policy of Education was made wherein a strong emphasis was given on primary education. The policy introduced the concept of basic education and work experience. The basic premise of the policy aimed to bring about maximum enrolment by means of making schools available to all children. This policy became the guiding principle of the Planning Commission in the successive plans; the fourth, fifth and sixth five-year plans (1969-1985). Around the same time, education which was previously a state subject was shifted to the concurrent list under the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976. Under the Act, both the

State Governments and Central Government are authorised to make a collective decision while framing an educational policy. Since the implementation of these plans, considerable progress has been reported, especially, in terms of school accessibility.

However, after realising the presence of persistent illiteracy in the country, the National Policy of Education (NPE, 1986) was set up with a view to best match the changing times. It redefined the policy of education along 'an investment in human development'. In fact, in the 'foreword' of the seventh five-year plan (1985-1990), Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi articulated literacy as an essential part of human resource development. The policy earmarked 6 % of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for education sector of which 50 % were to be allotted for the cause of primary education. The policy defined that the accessibility of primary schools should be within a distance of one kilometre. At the higher education level, the policy introduced a 10+2+3 pattern of the education system along with another significant intervention, while establishing the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) under the recommendation of this policy.

During the seventh plan period (1985-1990), the launch of several developmental policies and programmes took place. For instance, in 1987, as a move for the improvement of educational facilities in schools run by the Government, Panchayati Raj and local bodies, specifically, to enhance enrolment of children in the schools the operation blackboard scheme was introduced. Under the scheme, primary schools should be provided with two large rooms and separate toilets for boys and girls. There should be at least two teachers, one of them to be a woman. Teaching-learning materials such as blackboards, maps, charts, toys and practical work equipments should be provided. Besides, sufficient fund should be sanctioned by the Central Government to maintain proper housing,

required equipments and furniture for such schools. During 1987-88, Navodaya Vidyalayas (numbering 261 schools in 22 states and 7 Union Territories at class-VI level) were established by the Government to promote the progress of talented children in the rural areas. The admission tests in such schools are conducted by NCERT in a non-verbal form in the mother-tongue or the regional language. Seats are being reserved for ST, SC and girl students. During 1988, National Literacy Mission (NLM) was set up by the Government of India throughout the country through the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Department of Education and collaborating agencies of education. The main objective was to eradicate mass illiteracy by making literacy the people's mission. The Mission aims to ensure 'functional literacy' to 80 million illiterate persons in the age-group of 15-35 years; reaching out to the 30 million by 1990 and to the remaining 50 million by 1995. Functional literacy means achievement of self-reliance in literacy and numeracy, becoming aware of the causes of one's deprivation and going forward to improving oneself through participation in the development process and lifting up one's status economically with the acquired skills and education of the people with the values of national integration, environment conservation, small family planning norms and a sense of equality towards women. In an effort to achieve this aim, some of the steps undertaken to move forward include the establishment of a nationwide network of continuing education, open and distance learning and non-formal education both at the school and higher education levels (Bhatia and Bhatia, 1997:318-20). The observation made after this policy reported an increase in enrolment (Education for All, Year 2000 Assessment, Government of India p.18-19).

The years following the 1990s marked a shift of paradigm in the primary education system of the country. This paradigm shift is

very much related to the emerging global policy on 'education for all' under the Jomtien Declaration (1990) made in Thailand. The global focus on human development in the developing and third world countries gave emphasis on education as a primary means of social and economic development. Primary education (classes I-V) was the main focus of the Declaration. Human development became a priority in such a context. India being a signatory to the Declaration since 1992 began implementing the 'universal' primary education.

With a view to strengthening the education system, there has been various policy and practice developments in India after 1992. Worth mentioning among them is a revision on National Policy of Education, 1986 and the introduction of Programme of Action (POA, 1992). The revised policy considers primary education as a basic tool for the empowerment of weaker sections of the society. The main objective of these policies in general, was to establish a national system of education wherein all the students can have access to education of a comparable quality on equal footing, free from any kind of discrimination and particularly, to provide all the elementary school children education of a sustainable quality which is to be manifested in their level of learning. The policy got expressed in the eighth five-year plan (1992-97) during which universal access, retention and achievement became the plan target. This raised the need for teachers' training programme. Thus, District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) were instituted for training the teachers. Such processes were further redefined under the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts of the Constitution (1992) which empowered the local bodies like the Panchayati Raj institutions and city Municipals to run the primary schools. Some of the important schemes that have been launched for universalization of primary education system are District Primary Education Programmes

(DPEPs, 1994), Lok Jhumbish and Shiksha Karmis (Aggarwal, 2002:1-2).

It could be observed that that has also been kept in mind in the education missions for universalization of education for all children as seen in the central schemes such as the Black operation (1987), District Primary Education Programme (1994), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001) at primary level (up to class VIII), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (2009) at secondary level. This got figured in the tribal sub-plan and integrated tribal development programmes. Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan scheme (RUSA) for the state higher education institutions 2013 reaffirmed to address education issues of equity, access and excellence in higher education.

Ideology, Policy and Processes

As stated in the National Education Policy 1968 (onwards), the national education system is conceived within the larger national integration framework, where education is an important welfare service provided by the states for the social and economic upliftment of the tribes. At the ground level, is aimed at poverty alleviation and reduction of inequality. Towards this, the idea of 'basic education' (Nai Talim) was proposed from the very inception as suggested in Zakir Hussain Report, 1939.

In this backdrop, it can be noted that the current overall approach to tribal education is shaped by two realities; a) the peninsular region, generally, today referred to as Scheduled Tribes and b) the North-east region Scheduled Tribe areas. These areas have a specific context, issues, and experiences.

As regards to the peninsular region, the welfare agenda of tribe focusing on education can be traced back to the work of A. V. Thakkar in Gujarat in 1919. The idea of Ashram schools, residential schools as practiced across this region today is part of this history.

Taking the basic idea of education as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, these schools were supposed to be holistic in approach. The tribal children were brought from the villages and are educated in the local context. This model of school is rooted in the basic philosophy of the nationalist within the Gopal Krishna Gokhale who founded the organization, Servants of Society with the aim of training Indians for Swaraj. A. V. Thakkar who became closely associated with Gandhiji was a member of this organization. He became a very important person with regard to adivasi and tribes during the formulation of the Constitution. In the post-independence period, the idea of Ashramsalsas or basic schools came under the Grand-in-Aid which today is under the purview of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

With regards to the North-east and some regions in Chotanagpur, the Christian missionaries were very much crucial in their idea and implementation of the education system. In particular, the establishment of Serirampore missions is vital. The missionaries, the American Baptist and Welsh Mission were very influential since the Company era. Missionary work and education were closely related. The missionaries were closely monitored to make a conducive environment for the company.

Although both of them converge at in their perspective of civilizing tribes referred to as the 'primitive', 'adimjati' or 'aborigines', they differ at the religious and cultural level. In particular, A. V. Thakkar School wanted to prevent the spread of Christianity in the region and supported the propagation of Hindu culture and education among the Adivasis. This can be inferred from the National Conference in 1954 conducted under the leadership of A.V. Thakkar. This approach, to the tribes in the peninsular region, became very important institutions for the tribal children to learn and grow in the idea of Indian culture as envisioned by these pioneers.

On the other hand, the Christian missionaries were very successful in North-east tribal regions and parts of Adivasi communities in Chotanagpur region. In fact, the North-east region is outstanding in literacy rate. Education and Christianity have reinforced their culture and empowered them. This model is basically rooted in the debates and approaches to scheduled tribes in the Constitution influenced by the school of thought by Elwin Verrier, an isolation approach to tribes drawing from the understanding of the reality of Baigas and tribes in the north-eastern frontier region/agency. It advocated that tribes should be left into themselves. The state should adopt isolation and protection approach. This approach was pitched against the project of assimilation, particularly by G.S. Ghurye who propagated assimilation of the tribes into the caste social system. This considered tribes as 'Backward Hindus'. Therefore, the state should assimilate them into the mainstream society. However, this idea got confronted by the reality of tribes in the North-east region wherein they are culturally and linguistically not related to the Hindu social system. In fact, this is also true of the Chotanagpur Adivasis who were living a lifestyle which very distinct from the caste social system. However, it should be noted that both these approaches moved away from the Macaulay's policy of filter down theory approach, wherein education should be focused only on the limited few. The education/knowledge gained by such a handful of people should slowly teach others and the families of the educated should grow gradually. The two approaches focused on education for all children. In fact, the idea of equity in education could be rooted from these undertakings. Moreover, this confrontation produced an idea of India where there are caste and non-caste societies. The non-caste societies are generally referred to as Adivasis and tribes. Although, the concept of tribe is colonial, however, there was no alternative to this and in the constitution with the intervention of Dr.

B.R. Ambedkar, they are referred as Scheduled Tribes, a political administrative and legal term. In the light of this, the concept of 'Tribe' and 'Adivasi' although not endogenous, are today, used in legal and struggle perspective. The Tribes and Adivasis have been fairly accepted and used to connote to non-caste societies who are very heterogeneous across regions in their lived experiences but have certain common values, customs, and worldviews such as on the idea of culture, language, customary practices and self-rule. The founding fathers of our nation and our constitution framers took a positive approach called 'integration'. This is a middle path approach. Mahatma Gandhi emphasised the need to develop the tribes living in inaccessible places so as to ensure their integration. In particular, Jawaharlal Nehru in the strategy for the development called 'Panchsheel' mentioned that they should be integrated without disintegration of their social distinctiveness (Shymlal, 1987.2). In the light of this, Dhebar Committee (October 14, 1961) for the first time, made an affirmative statement for specific education policy for the tribes towards development. Among other things, it advocated for local teachers for the tribal areas. This report provided guiding principle for National Education Policy 68 and New Education Policy 1986/1992 with regard to scheduled tribes. The Report as a policy matter recommended that,

“To end the present chaotic conditions in the field which prevail in some of the states, werecommend that there should be one system, one policy-making body and one operating channel in the tribal areas. Education is primarily the responsibility of the State Government and they so far as primary and secondary education is concerned, must take over the sole responsibility.”

Over the last decades, the policy commitment and responsibility of Government on tribal education can be inferred in the number of schemes introduced that covers tribal children.

In the post1990s, there has been a shift of approach; from welfare to rights and justice accompanied with a growing influence of the private/market on education. This has given rise to issues of educational rights of the poorest against inequality created by the emergence of elite private schools. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 which is also called as Right to Education Act is a major intervention. In fact, in the context of tribes, the Right to Education Act needs to include the idea of equity consideration the nature of isolation and deprivations they faced. This idea seems to have become louder within the emerging public-private social responsibility in the recent times.

Moreover, with regard the tribes/Adivasis, the educational issues are complex and needs specific policy commitments to address it. On the whole, issues of accessibility and drop-out still persist. There is no respite to issues of geographical isolation, backwardness, cultural difference, poverty, ignorance, and ignorance which has been highlighted even before the Independence as one can read them in A. V. Thakkar Memorial lecture in 1941. In spite of all efforts made in the Governments over the period of time for tribal education after the 1950s, the situation is still gloomy. This is confirmed in 1970 ICSSR survey, Suma Chitnis (Maharashtra) and Kabui Gangmumei (Northeast) survey report. The problem is further highlighted in the recent ICSSR survey (yet to be published). The survey indicates the persistence of accessibility issue. This is further affirmed in the Xaxa Report, 2014. This Report observed (based on the census data) that the government efforts have a positive impact on the educational status of scheduled tribes, although the gap is still there (58.97 percent against 72.99). The issue of drop out and accessibility is still persisting. In this backdrop, the report further problematised government policies and programmes in relation to the project of national integration. Based on the data available on

the displacement of tribal in the development projects, the report questioned integration and viewed it as an adverse inclusion and dispossession. This report comes in the wake of the government attempts to bring inclusive education since the 12 twelfth five-year plan. Over and above, emerging data from the tribal areas indicate a trend suggesting privatization and commercialization and the likelihood of exclusion for the tribes. In the similar line, the latest move for New Education Policy has been critiqued by many tribal activists. In particular, Sadgopal (2016), critiquing on the draft education policy, indicates that the proposed policy is not inclusive.

Towards Inclusive Education with Equity

In the present condition, U-DISE indicates a minimalist approach in schooling of the tribal children. In particular, one can conclude with some sense that tribal education initially rooted as a voluntary response to the condition of tribal peoples in India still forms the philosophical foundation of education of the tribal children. This sector became an active partner of the welfare service delivery system in the post-independence period. The sector has the commitment and could reach out to places where it is difficult for Government to reach. However, this social response is likely to be limited as its motivation is rooted in a belief of religious endowment, charity, and philanthropy. It could be a detached work where there is a likelihood of tribes being taken as mere beneficiaries.

Moreover, the empirical data also highlights policy issues emanating from a certain perspective towards tribes raising questions of membership as citizens and their stake in the formulation of the policy. It indicates the possibility of a gap between policy framework and reality of the people. This gap will appear if the policy does not recognise and give space for people to be constructive,

interpretative persons and collectives in the realization of the policy. This can be also observed in the event of tribes being driven to the peripheries. This mindset can have an immense influence on the policy-makers and the administrators. If such is the case, the aim of establishing a conducive environment for the children will get defeated. Children are likely to be marginalised and de-motivated to learn and grow which will adversely affect their growth and development as children.

A possible solution to the problem will come from the policy and change in mindset of the policy-makers, administrators, and teachers. This has to begin with a policy that evolves from the lived experiences of the people. For this, Debhar Committee report (1961-62) can give a good direction. Education should entail the creation of space for the positive recognition of tribal children, villages and rural reality. It should ensure a system where every child, Tribal/Adivasi child in particular, regardless of the socio-economic status, gender, caste, and religion has equal access to quality education.

While there is an attempt of observation by the present Government to bring about a relevant and contextually arrived at a policy of education grounded on values, knowledge, and skills, the policy-makers cannot be blind on the realities of the rural and tribal areas. The Government has a Constitutional commitment to bring education for all children. The responsibility of evolving an inclusive education system built on the principles of access, equality, and equity fundamentally lies on the Government. In this direction, the reality insists that Government Schools are important to uphold an education system that responds to the lived-experiences of the people especially, those in the vulnerable locations. The government is accountable to the Constitution Article 21 (A) and Right to Education Act, 2009. Right to Life is fundamental to it.

Education should generate a dignified social environment for every child to grow to full maturity. In particular, when it comes to the tribal children, the attempt to evolve an environment that satisfies dignified life, it has to be understood from the lived experience and worldviews. The tribal children as agents are critical aspects in the process of arriving at the conducive environment. In this sense, creating a pragmatic education system is closely linked to recognition of the agency and worldviews of the tribal children. They are a critical part of building an inclusive system. They are not mere target groups and beneficiaries for the charity and welfare but are active parts of the working of the system. The worldviews, culture, identities and their struggles are foundational to inclusive education. A policy recognition of cultural diversity and values as the foundation of a new education policy will get realised only when this framed is grounded on principles of access, equality, and equity. The policy recognition and protection of the diversity of worldviews is a fundamental responsibility of Government, a non-negotiable reality in the Indian context. In the absence of such a perspective, institutional assimilation and social exclusion/adverse inclusion are bound to happen.

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Building Accountability Systems around Inclusive Schooling through Shaala Siddhi

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Abstract

In the last decade enrolment rates in India have been increasing steadily with the current enrolment rate being close to 97%. Simultaneously dropout rates of traditionally marginalized populations such as girls, SC, ST and OBC students and children with special needs, have declined. The legal discourse in Indian education has shifted from segregation in pre-independence India, to integration in the 60's and 70's as seen in the Kothari Commission(1966) and IEDCS, to inclusion under the RTE of 2009. This shift in definition is also accompanied by a shift in accountability from the blame lying in the inadequacies of a student to that of holding the system accountable. However, in practice, integration is rarely seen let alone inclusion, largely because there is no strong mechanism to ensure implementation. In this context, the introduction of Shaala Siddhi in 2015, a national framework of standards to evaluate quality across comprehensive parameters was a significant step. For the first time, inclusive schooling was incorporated as a domain in its own right, into a framework for quality evaluation of schools across the country. This paper seeks to analyse Shaala Siddhi to deconstruct its definition of inclusion in schools, as well as to propose a collaborative evaluation process supported by strong governance model and data flow, to make it an effective tool that not only continuously builds a common understanding of inclusion across stakeholders within the government school eco-system, but also builds accountability at all levels.

Key Words: Inclusion, integration, systemic school quality frameworks, accountability across the school eco-system, collaborative evidence-based school evaluation

Introduction

As assessors we travel the entire country to conduct school reviews. Regardless of geography and income level, a universal woe that plagues most teachers and principals is the ‘No Detention Policy’ under the Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009. Under this policy a student cannot be detained up to class 8 (RTE, 2009). It is not uncommon for us to hear teachers and principals say things like – “All the smart students have moved to the new private school and we have been left with all these dull students”, or “these children come from such bad backgrounds, how are we supposed to get good results.” The ‘No Detention Policy’ (NDP) seemed to be disruptive as it no longer blamed students for underperforming, but instead held teachers and school leaders responsible for not being able to cater to diverse learners. Due to the backlash it received in August 2017, the clause is meant to be amended in the RTE in the next session.

This paper is not about the NDP, but rather about the question of accountability when it comes to inclusive schooling. The narrative around the world often focuses on the lack of ability of those who get excluded from the system, rather than seeking accountability across the system (Tomlinson, 2017). Worse still, sometimes the least powerful within the system are held accountable – in this case it is the teachers, rather than the system that prepares and supports them. Our organization, Adhyayan Quality Education Services, has reviewed more than 380 schools spanning 26 states across various boards, fee levels, and sizes. According to our data only 6.5% school leaders oversee teaching and learning in their schools and

only 7% of schools have effective and needs based trainings for teachers. Students in 24% schools feel comfortable asking for help when faced with any kind of learning or social difficulty and only in 6.5% schools, students have a clear understanding of their need and ways to improve their performance. In 10% schools, students are provided with the necessary support and in 9.8% schools, students have shown good progress, regardless of their starting point (AQES data, 2017). This data highlights a disturbing yet logical chain of events - unless teachers are observed by their principals and provided with needs based trainings, students are not provided with the required support and hence do not make progress. However, as mentioned earlier, it is not fair to hold teachers or school principals accountable in isolation, but rather the larger system that does not equip educators to work with diversity. Although there has been a decrease of 38% out of school children in India between 2001 and 2007; dropout rates among populations such as SC, Adivasi students, girls, children with disabilities is still high (USAID, 2011). About 34% of children with disabilities in India are out of school (UNICEF, 2015). The system equips people to label students as “bright” and “dull” or from a “good background” or “bad background” but does not enable them to be responsive to needs and support different types of learners.

This paper posits that in order to make inclusive education a reality it is not enough to have laws in place, but an evaluation system is required to ensure accountability. Our contention is that Shaala Siddhi, the National Programme of School Standards and Evaluation (NUEPA, 2015), could serve as the mechanism through which this is achieved, as not only does it involve internal and external stakeholders from schools to evaluate inclusion, but it also has been rolled out nationally and has the potential to support with surfacing and addressing this need on a systemic scale.

The following sections of the paper outline the literature and evolution of the narrative of inclusive schooling in the Indian context, followed by an analysis of the definition of inclusion in Shaala Siddhi as well as proposed strategies to ensure that the framework can help build accountability around inclusive education.

Understanding the landscape of inclusive education in India

When one looks at the evolution of the discourse around inclusive education in India there are two interesting trends – First, it mostly defines inclusion in terms of persons with disabilities and not in terms of diversity of all kinds; Second, it mirrors the global evolution of a shift in the conversation from segregation (where children with disabilities attend separate and specialised schools) to integration (where children with diverse needs are brought into mainstream schools and made to adjust) to inclusion (where the school aims to change its culture and pedagogy to become responsive to the needs of all types of students, with a focus on equity) (Singal, 2005). This second trend also corresponds to the question of accountability as one can see the shift from blaming a student for their inadequacies to holding the larger system responsible for creating an enabling learning environment.

The first “special need based school” in India was established in 1869 and catered to the needs of students with visual impairments. In the early 1900’s segregated schools moved beyond catering to students with physical disabilities and began exploring the needs of those with cognitive challenges. Segregated workshops and trade schools were established in the 1940’s to provide people with disabilities with the skills to enter the workforce. Although in pre-independence India, one sees leaders like Gandhi and Gopal Krishna Gokhale demanding integrated schooling for students from

all types of backgrounds, this is not accompanied by legislative changes (Kohama, 2012).

Concrete ideas around integration in schooling began to take shape in the 1960's with the advent of the Kothari Commission of 1966. The commission made strong recommendations to integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schools, considering it as cost-effective and help in building a sense of mutual respect and understanding (Alur, 2002; Puri & Abraham, 2004). These recommendations received some traction in the form of the National Education Policy of 1968 that sought to integrate children with physical and cognitive disabilities into mainstream schools (Jha, 2002). The theme of integration continues through the 1970's with the establishment of the Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC) scheme that sought to provide material to support children with disabilities, as well as support to teachers (Dasgupta, 2002). Although the focus remained on children with disabilities, the shift in accountability is visible in the attempt to address the skills of teachers.

Influenced by global developments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, Jomteim Conference of 1990 and Salamanca Statement of 1994, the language of inclusion begins to enter the Indian conversation in the 1980's (Mukhopadhyay and Mani, 2000), resulting in the passing of the Persons with Disabilities Act in India in 1995 (Jha, 2002). However, as Singal (2005) point out most literature during this period tends to use integration and inclusion interchangeably and continues to associate inclusive education with persons with disabilities. In present day legislation, the RTE of 2009 provides a broader definition of inclusion by addressing the needs of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds as well as children with special needs. Further, it uses language centred on equity. However, it straddles the line between

the worlds of integration and inclusion as is evident in some of the proposed strategies to deal with marginalized populations listed out in SSA's Framework for Implementation Based on the RTE, 2009 (MHRD, 2011).

The narrative of the evolution of legal provisions in inclusive education is incomplete without fully understanding the issue of accountability. While prior to the 1960's the onus was entirely on the inability of certain types of students to cope and therefore to segregate them. In the 1980's there begins an increasing emphasis on the ability and skills of a teacher to cater to diverse learners, hence holding both the teacher as well as teacher education institutions accountable, as is evident in the RTE. However, a parallel trend is embodied in national forums such as the "Integrated Education for the Disabled", that advocated the idea of pre-requisites in terms of communication and skills that students must exhibit in order to be ready for school (Ed. CIL, 1999), hence continuing to hold students who were not able to cope in the mainstream responsible for not being able to succeed, the residue of which can be seen in the debate surrounding the NDP.

While the above seeks to illustrate the shift in the discourse in terms of accountability, the question of how accountability is ensured is equally important. If one were to examine various quality frameworks introduced by both the state and central governments, right from the Education Development Index to state developed frameworks such as Gunotsav (Gujarat) and Samiksha (Odisha), it primarily deal with inclusion only in terms of ensuring enrolment of marginalized populations as well as infrastructure requirements such as ramps. While the Karnataka School Quality Assessment and Accreditation (KSQAA) does address the issue of inclusion in terms of pedagogy, it was restricted to the state level. Hence, it is not surprising that one does not see a significant shift in

pedagogy in government schools with regard to inclusion as the mechanism to monitor quality. In 2015, Shaala Siddhi, the National Programme on School Standards and Evaluation, was introduced nationally. Developed by NUEPA for the MHRD, the tool consists of a separate domain dedicated to inclusion that goes beyond merely examining enrolment rates, but instead raises questions about a school's culture and pedagogy as well as the overall progress of all learners. So far, it has been rolled out across 4.5 lakh schools nationally, of which the majority are government schools (NUEPA online platform).

The subsequent sections of this paper seek to evaluate the conceptual framing of inclusion in Shaala Siddhi and also explore the crucial role that this tool can play in ensuring that accountability begins to spread beyond the school, to the entire education eco-system.

Methodology

This paper relies primarily on document analysis in the form of existing academic literature, laws and the Shaala Siddhi Framework itself. The paper analyses the current conception of inclusion in India through the existing school evaluation framework. The proposed strategies to build accountability rely on Adhyayan's six years of experience in bringing about improvement through school reviews across 385 schools, as well as the success of systemic reform through school reviews in other parts of the world.

Building Accountability around Inclusive Schooling through Shaala Siddhi

Shaala Siddhi is uniquely positioned in comparison to the frameworks that have preceded it, in that it has been rolled out nationally, thus affording the opportunity of building a common vocabulary and understanding of inclusion in schools across the

country. Further, a pivotal point of departure lies in its emphasis on self-evaluation, wherein the evaluation is meant to be conducted by the school leader and other stakeholders such as students, SMC members and teachers, thus disrupting the conventional paradigm of the school inspection. Traditionally an external inspector assesses the performance of a school. Schools are expected to gather evidence and rate their performance on a 3 -point scale, based on the rubric provided. Hence, not only is the process evidence-based, but it also keeps the school's voice at the centre of the process with the aim of providing the school with a medium to surface its needs to the rest of the educational eco-system. So far, in most states, the evaluation has only reached the self-evaluation stage. However certain states like Maharashtra have undertaken external evaluations as well to validate the data gathered by the school team (NUEPA online platform).

Although inclusion is not the only focus of this framework, however inclusion been incorporated in a national evaluation framework as a domain in its own right. Further, the issue is addressed throughout the framework in a manner that goes beyond mere enrolment data and infrastructure provision. Shaala Siddhi consists of 7 domains to measure quality, across 46 standards:

- Enabling Resources of School: Availability, adequacy and usability
- Teaching-learning and Assessment
- Learners' Progress, Attainment and Development
- Managing Teacher Performance and Professional Development
- School Leadership and Management
- Inclusion, Health and Safety
- Productive Community Participation

Deconstructing the conceptualization of inclusion in Shaala Siddhi

Before examining how Shaala Siddhi can be used to build accountability around inclusive education, it is important to understand how the framework defines and evaluates inclusion.

“The idea that ‘all children can learn’ forms the underlying basis for ‘universalization’ of education. The RTE Act further lends credibility to this notion that all children can learn irrespective of their gender, caste, socio-economic background, etc. This necessitates inclusion of children with diverse backgrounds into the ambit of schooling. Inclusion not only means ‘including all’, but also providing equal opportunity to every child, thereby following the principles of equity. Furthermore, including all children in equitable ways demands the creation of a safe and healthy environment that ensures physical and emotional well-being of all learners.” (NUEPA, 2015, p. 91)

The above section is an excerpt from the definition of the ‘Inclusion, Health and Safety’ domain of Shaala Siddhi. This tool exemplifies its commitment towards the belief that ‘all children can learn’, in that it attributes the challenges of diverse learners to the quality of teaching as opposed to an inherent flaw in the learner. Domain 2 requires teachers to spend time understanding the needs and strengths of their learners, to deliver effective teaching. They are also expected to use a variety of teaching styles to engage all kinds of learners. Further, under domain 5, leaders are expected to understand and reflect on the professional development needs of teachers. This is reinforced in domain 6, where the school is encouraged to leverage resources like NGO’s who could potentially train teachers. Hence the accountability to ensure a learner’s progress isn’t viewed as the teacher’s alone.

Apart from pedagogy, Shaala Siddhi also ventures into the territory of inclusive culture within a school in which similar evaluation frameworks in the past have not been engaged in the same manner. There is a special focus on the school being responsive to the needs of all students regardless of their background and abilities. In domain 2, teachers are expected to create an environment where all learners feel comfortable expressing themselves, and the teachers reaffirms all points of view. The definition of diversity is not restricted to “accommodating” children with disabilities alone, but becoming responsive to diversity of all kinds. The framework is also sensitive toward ensuring that diverse parents are represented in the SMC to be able to articulate the needs of various groups. Culture is also visible in the fact that libraries are expected to have diverse content, keeping in mind the linguistic backgrounds of the learners.

This framework also succeeds to some extent in being able to move away from provision regarding inclusive education, towards impact. In most frameworks provisions such as toilets and classrooms for people with disabilities, ramps, assessments and a check on enrolment rates of risk populations exist. However, rarely has a framework begun to engage with the question of the impact of these provisions. In the case of Shaala Siddhi, an attempt is being made to gauge the impact on the learner. For example, in domain 3 the overall (academic and non-academic) progress of learners is required to be tracked, analysed and acted upon in terms of extending appropriate support to the student. In domain 2, it is not enough to have some students participating but all students must be engaged in their own learning. Teachers are expected to go beyond merely assessing students, but to use the data and feedback from learners and effectively alter their practice. Although, the tool does still

focus on provision in other areas, the attempt to move towards impact in some crucial aspects is refreshing and a step towards right direction.

Where the tool resembles the older discourse of integration and segregation is the places where attainment is tied to a fixed notion of ability. Phrases such as “School...aspires to achieve/exceed state/national levels of learner attainment” (NUEPA, 2015, p.55) and “most learners’ attainment is at par/above expected grade level across the school.” (NUEPA, 2015, p. 56) not only contradict ideas within this framework that talk about learners working at their own pace but also implies that there are pre-determined levels of potential and ability that students must meet. When viewed in isolation, this sounds fairly innocuous, but if one were to look at the literature around special education in other parts of the world, such narratives have been used to determine who has higher ability levels and who has lower ability levels, based on very narrow criteria. Thus, not only manufacturing the idea of inability but using that to label and exclude certain students, who then after graduating are relegated to low paying careers, thus perpetuating a cycle of inequality (Tomlinson, 2017). International (Tomlinson, 2017) and Indian research (Aggarwal, 2001; Singal 2005) also confirm that very often the majority of children from lower income families with disabilities or learning difficulties tend to get weeded out of the school system.

Hence, while Shaala Siddhi does to some extent replicate the narrative of integration like preceding frameworks, there is a strong attempt to not only widen the understanding of diversity and inclusive culture, but also emphasise the impact of provisions that have been put into place for inclusive schooling.

Strengthening the Eco-System for Accountability: A

Proposed Strategy

In order for inclusive schooling to infiltrate the mainstream, assessment obsessed conversation around education in India, it is imperative that accountability mechanisms view this as a crucial component of educational quality. Shaala Siddhi has the potential to achieve it as it has been rolled out nationally. Based on successful school evaluation models in other parts of the world (Chapman & Sammons, 2013) and the 6 years of wide ranging experience and data of Adhyayan Quality Education Services, this paper proposes the idea that the existing processes of Shaala Siddhi can be enhanced to strengthen its effectiveness in building accountability around inclusive education in India.

As mentioned in a previous section, Shaala Siddhi's model is based on the idea of evidence-based self-evaluation followed by an external evaluation conducted by members from within the government system. External validators could range from being Head Masters of other schools to District Education Officers to School Inspectors. In order for Shaala Siddhi to become a tool that ensures accountability and improvement across the education eco-system, we propose 3 strategies:

- i. A collaborative model of school evaluation led by a cadre of trained external validators
- ii. A platform that enables an efficient flow of information across stakeholders
- iii. An oversight governance structure to ensure that progress is being made

Currently, several states have undertaken the self-evaluation across schools, while some have begun the process of external validations. Based on our experience in the field, a collaborative

model of review is extremely effective, where stakeholders from the school (leaders, students, SMC, teachers) as well as external validators (members from the SCERT, school inspectors, District Education Officers, Cluster Resource Persons, NGO representatives, faculty from the DIET etc.) form one team and collectively gather evidence using tested methods of evidence collection. This type of review is not meant to be punitive, but supportive. A cadre of external validators from within the system need to be trained to undertake such reviews. Not only does this model provide external validators the opportunity to guide the conversation and support the school's review team, but it also enables all stakeholders to develop a common vocabulary and understanding that is evidence-based. Further, when schools are able to see external validators working alongside them with the view of improvement and support, the threat of a traditional external inspection is erased and the ability for a school to celebrate its strengths increases (Chapman and Sammons, 2013). Since issues of inclusion and diversity have always been challenging, this type of model allows for the space to begin to present evidence of gaps in the system. For instance, if several schools were to rate low on all learners' making progress as well as on teachers' professional development, a strong case can be built for the need to train teachers to deal with diverse learners. However, such needs may not emerge in the model where self and external evaluations are separate, as within the government school system, inspections have been associated with fear and are often approached with the view of impressing the inspector rather than presenting authentic data.

A second concern that emerges with Shaala Siddhi, is that currently schools can upload their individual data, but there are no automated mechanisms to aggregate this data as well as for this data to reach the relevant departments that can take and monitor action. Hence, Shaala Siddhi stands the risk of becoming yet another

checklist among a myriad other checklist within a bureaucratic education system. Also, if the data is not circulated across the system, accountability stops at the level of the school, which is not entirely helpful as issues such as teacher training, which is beyond the control of the school, will go unaddressed. In order for this model to be successful in terms of truly bringing about improvement in schools, it is crucial that the flow of information across various bodies from and to the school is effective. For example, not only should the data across schools be aggregated at the cluster, block, district levels, but schools should also have the ability to report their needs in real time through the platform. For example, if a school does not have materials that it can use with different types of learners, it should be able to report that to the relevant body within the Directorate of Education that handles this area. Again if teachers in a particular school have not been trained to support students with special needs, they should be able to report it, and bodies such as the SCERT as well as DIET's should be notified. Dashboards should also exist for each educational body, like the DIET, to be able to see what needs seem to be emerging within a cluster or district, so that interventions can be designed accordingly. Currently most interventions are not need based. Professional development tends to be generic. Further, higher authorities such as Education Commissioners, Directors of Directorates of Education, the Chief Minister of a state, should be able to see what action has been taken regarding reported needs. As is evident from other countries that have been able to bring about significant systemic school improvement, an efficient flow and use of data is crucial (Elwick & McAleavy, 2016).

Finally, most frameworks in the past have failed because of the lack of a governance oversight structure. Unless data is reviewed regularly at various levels, starting from the school to

the state, improvement is unlikely. However, data should not be used to penalize schools, but rather to identify areas of support and monitor growth. The Shaala Siddhi evaluation should be a part of the school's annual calendar, as should data evaluation and monitoring meetings at various levels. Only when something is embedded within a system, is it likely to endure. Further, every state should have a quality assurance cell that owns the process of evaluation led improvement, and it should consist of stakeholder's right from the level of the school to educational authorities at the highest level of the state. Higher performing districts in terms of inclusive schooling should be incentivized in order to acknowledge those who make an effort and to motivate those who do not see inclusion as being possible in schools.

Hence, Shaala Siddhi has the potential to become the tool that enables advocates of inclusive education to have a stronger voice in the mainstream and a mechanism to use data to build accountability across the education eco-system.

Conclusion

A young adult who had a segregated school experience due to a learning difficulty, once told me that being in special education felt like being given a box with three apples where if you tried to reach out for the fourth apple that was outside the box, you were told it didn't exist for you. This narrative of lowered expectation based on fixed notions of ability has existed in our system since time immemorial. Hence, the subsequent lack of accountability is not surprising, given the implicit understanding that some people will never achieve, hence are not deserving of additional resources.

The experience of exclusion, be it on the grounds of socio-economic background or ability, is very personal and isolating in schools. For far too long, students and their families have been made

to feel responsible for their exclusion. Although the narrative in Indian schools has moved from segregation to elements of inclusion, there is still a lack of accountability across the education system to ensure that schools become inclusive.

Accountability can be brought about through the Shaala Siddhi evaluation framework. Given its national reach, it has the ability to make inclusion a part of the mainstream conversation in education. This paper strongly posits that accountability must be shared across the education eco-system, and schools should have a central voice in being able to articulate their struggles regarding inclusive schooling. Shaala Siddhi, seems to be a promising framework in this regard as it tries to approach diversity not just in terms of infrastructure and enrolment, but in terms of pedagogy, school culture and the resources being provided to schools to accomplish this goal. Further, by allowing schools to evaluate themselves, it provides a formal forum for schools to surface their needs and participate in their improvement journey. If enhanced with a collaborative school evaluation model, a clear flow of information between relevant educational bodies and a support-oriented governance oversight structure, this tool could mark the beginning of the realisation of inclusive schooling at scale.

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Higher Education: Policy, Practice and Movements: An Overview from Subaltern Perspective

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Abstract:

Indian higher educational system is third largest in the world, next to China and United States of America. Despite having a largest educational system, many students are unable to reach higher educational institutions. Many students drop out from the higher educational institutions for several reasons. Hence, this paper deals with the policy and practice of higher education in India and its counter in the form of movements from subaltern perspectives. This paper argues that despite several education policies and substantial economic growth, India ranks low in terms of higher education in the world ranking system. What are the reasons behind India's low performance in world ranking system? How the policies of higher education negatively impacted on Indian students in general and on marginalized students in particular? Development of the higher education and the problems associated with it raises many questions. The paper will look critically into the problems in policy framing, its practices and its impact on the Indian higher education system. Indian society is divided on the basis of caste, class, language, religion etc. In such situations, rapid privatization of education has also been killing the spirits of the marginalized students to pursue higher education. This paper is purely theoretical and base on secondary data, such as studies, articles, journals, magazines, reports, etc. It is critically examines the situations from the subaltern

perspective which is humanitarian in nature. Some of the recent developmental policies in higher education are also examined in the study.

Key Words: Higher Education, Development, Marginalised, Caste, Subaltern

Introduction:

The inclusive growth of higher education is an important parameter to define the nation's development. Higher education not only plays a vital role in self and social development but also largely for nation development. It develops the understanding to examine the reality, unravel the truth and rationality among the students and questions the very existence of inequality and injustice in the society. Higher education in Indian context is a monopoly of certain elite section of the society. Due to reservation and affirmative policies the weaker sections could get admissions in higher educational institutions. After getting the admission in institutions, students raise the questions of inequality and injustice in classrooms and inside and outside the campuses.

Higher Education in India:

Higher education is connected with primary education. The enrolment ratio in the primary education may lead to the higher education. But many of the students from the marginalized group cannot complete their primary education. Hence their participation in higher education is low compared to general caste students. Many premier higher educational institutions teach the courses in the English language. In such an English competitive world, completing his/her higher education in English medium is difficult for vernacular background students. Higher education in India is not inclusive for all the sections of the society.

There are disparities in accessing higher education on the basis of poverty, caste, ethnicity and gender, whereas urban upper caste is highly dominated in higher educational spaces. Indian universities have become a place for discrimination on the basis of caste. Hence, many lower caste/class students have committed suicide in the higher educational institutions. Many of these have happened in elite higher education institutions of the country (Chowdhury, 2017). Further, Chowdhury argues that instead of having a transformative role, in most part, the Indian university plays a key role in the reproduction of the inequities of the Indian social system. Finally, the paper points out that this have been possible because of poverty of politics in India.

India's universities and its higher education institutions, especially the ones that are funded by the government have been founded with the objectives enshrined in Indian Constitution, those of justice, liberty, and equality. The higher education has an ambition to enlighten students and create the society on equality liberty, fraternity and justice. In reality, the Indian university is a space where injustice continues, on a number of axes of discrimination. Language, caste, class, gender, urban/rural, and physiological disability all of these provide the sources of discrimination (Chowdhury, 2017). According to Dr. Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze (2011), in spite of high rate of economic growth, India lags behind Bangladesh on all basic health indicators and on a large number of primary and secondary education indicators. Low level of enrolment in primary and secondary education leads to the low level of gross enrolment ratio in higher education.

Policies of Higher Education and Its Implications:

In Indian context, society have been fragmented on caste hierarchy. Caste creates an antipathy and hatred towards other caste

fellow beings. The dominant policy prescriptions and environment that has ensured the growth of English as a new caste marker which subjugated lower caste students in higher educational institutions, a tool of domination and of material enrichment in the hands of numerically tiny but powerful elite (Chowdhury, 2017). Students from the weaker section of the societies are first generation learner in higher educational institutions. In highly sophisticated environment, weaker section of the society takes some time to adjust with the environment. University campuses have failed to maintain the harmony and equality among the students.

An elite higher education institution has led to a dismal state of higher education and development. In the last 25 years, India has experienced reasonably high rate of economic growth, and the purchasing power and size of the middle class have grown. At the same time, the primary health indicators and the basic education indicators of the country have remained poor, in many instances, much worse than a poorer economy, that of neighbouring Bangladesh. While India is considered as an important emerging economy, the ground realities of living condition of the majority of Indians remains abysmally poor (Chowdhury, 2017).

In reality, the Indian university is a space where injustice continues, on a number of axes of discrimination, such as language, caste, class, gender, urban/rural, and physiological disability (Chowdhury, 2017). The very fundamental question arises who are the policymakers? The policies are framed by the central cabinet secretariat who mostly belong to upper caste communities. Their ideologies impacted the Indian higher education system. The policies which are prescribed since independence seems to be irrelevant and could not create the egalitarian society on the basis of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice. Indian higher education system has always seen the dominant patterns on Indian thoughts, ideas, ideals

and structures that govern India. The higher education policy work is to lead for social transformation. However, Indian government and educational institutions could not make a just society.

The policies which are framed do not take into consideration all the students of the society. Indian society has been divided on the basis on caste hierarchy where less percent of the population has benefited and more have been neglected. The forward Caste, Class student who have studied in English medium schools do well while marginalized students from the vernacular education medium lag behind. In order to compete with each other, same higher educational policies would not work. The problems lies here are that since the Mandal Commission Report; it started implementations in higher education, the participation of the OBC students increased. It challenged the supremacy of the dominant caste in the higher educational spaces. Since then privatizations of schools started. Dominant castes pursued a primary and secondary education in English medium school whereas a large number of students studied in local vernacular medium and it became challenging for marginalized students to compete with forward students.

The very big challenge is that Indian Universities could not run the programme of human rights widely. The violation of human rights is rampantly increasing. Indian universities could not produce the talented intellectuals for changing the society which is based on caste hierarchy. Policies play a vital role in shaping the ideas of the mind. The areas where the policy thinkers see the university failing are as follows: absence of a robust humanistic tradition, inability of integration of work into the university world, disconnect between theory and practice, fragmentation of the idea of knowledge, a depressing examination system, stigmatization of vocational education, and absence of academic leadership. The ideology and political ideas of India's privileged classes that have shaped Indian higher education (Chowdhury, 2017).

Movements, Politics and Policies in Higher Education:

Politics and higher education are inextricably linked. In 1990, Prime Minister V.P. Singh, a man of socialist vision, accepted the recommendations of Mandal Commission that had advocated reservation for OBCs in higher education and in government jobs in addition to the already existing reservation for ST and SC populations. Students from upper castes brought out rallies, held protest movements, and received front-page attention in newspapers. University teachers joined them in their attempt to save excellence in higher education; they felt that with more reservations for backward castes, academic standards will be badly affected. Passion rose high to defend Brahminical Entitlements; in a few instances, upper-caste students took to self-immolation (Chowdhury, 2017). The policymakers of the county seem to forget that nation does not belong to the one particular section of the society; excluding other section of the society from representation and decision-making process would lead to the turmoil and unrest in the society. In order to become a nation, the participation of youths from all the categories of the society is required.

Educational campuses have failed to create a humanitarian student community. It has created a notion of caste rampantly. Due to the failure of the higher educational authorities, many students from the marginalized section of the societies committed suicides. In early 2016, Dalit student, Rohith Vemula, who was pursuing his PhD in University of Hyderabad, committed suicide. That became a national issue, student activists organized protest meets in different campuses, and citizens took out rallies condemning the callousness of university management that had most likely led to Rohit's suicide. Vemula had left behind a suicide note which was an indictment of casteist mentality of university and nation as a whole (Chowdhury, 2017). When subaltern learns to speak out in English and acquires

dominant discourse; their voices are curtailed and precluded. This has been proven Indian higher educational institutions and Rohith Vemula was not an exceptional one. With this particular incidence, more questions have raised with the identity and integrity of the higher education in India.

‘Rohith’ is a reminder that ‘subalterns’ cannot speak the truth, either for themselves or for others (Seethi, *The Hindu*, January 27, 2016). Higher educational institutions are creating new “division of labour” and “new class structure” which is based on caste identity. Higher educational spaces should have been the spaces for the annihilation of caste and should have given the contribution in nation building process. According to Seethi, there are many challenges in higher education campuses. Mainly, policies are framed to curtail the educational expenses, the rolling back of educational subsidies, cutting down of the number of the fellowship/scholarships, the lack of burden-sharing social spaces, the decline of mainstream political forces on campus and increasing acceptance of a highly individualised social Darwinian mindset (Seethi, *The Hindu*, January 27, 2016).

In IIT Chennai, in recent years, the Periyar–Ambedkar study circle has challenged the casteist order of things in higher education and more widely; over the decades in some of Calcutta’s campuses, student groups have come out in substantial numbers against injustices of state power. However, considering the huge mass of Indian college and university students, this group of ideologically alive ones is a miniscule proportion (Chowdhury, 2017).

Privatisation of Higher Education:

In 1990, the Mandal Commission recommendations were accepted by the government; in 1991, economic liberalization was inaugurated; and since the late 1980s, private higher education

have expanded. Subsequently these leaps and bounds have largely bypassed the system of reservation. Economic liberalization, economic globalization, and privatization are the three pillars of material life that most Indian political parties have accepted (Chowdhury, 2017). Privatisation and liberalisation is a systematic discriminatory policy against the reserve categories. Reservation policy is a constitutionally applicable only in government sector whereas reservation is not applicable in private sector. Hence, the very systematically privatisation of the institutions started.

It is very ironical that the when large sections of the marginalized groups started pursuing higher education after the implementations of Mandal commissions 2006, privatization of school, colleges and higher educational institutions started. Due to reservations policies, many students from the marginalized groups started pursuing higher education. The participation from the same groups increased in the educational institutions. The very moment privatization of higher education started, the tuitions fees are raised. The government has liberalized the entry of private sector in higher education which has lots of implications to access the higher education to the poorer section of the society.

India's Position in Global Community:

Despite having the substantial economic growth of the country, gross enrolment ratio is 12 percent which is very low as compared to other developing and developed countries. In order to improve the social status of the county in the world market, their participation should be higher in higher education. There are various reasons for low enrolment ratio in higher education. They are mainly, disparities in rich and poor, higher caste and lower caste, social exclusion and inclusion, urban and rural, English medium and vernacular medium etc. There is no unitary educational system in India. Since the 3

years of the age of students are divided in convent school (Private) and Anganwadi School (Government). After 1st standard, some students studies in English medium in private school and some students studies in the vernacular medium in a government school. These disparities we find in higher education too. Hence, many students from the low economic, social background and vernacular background cannot reach to the higher educational institutions. Therefore, India’s gross enrolment ratio is less as compared to other developed countries. Comparative gross enrolment ratio has been shown in the following table.

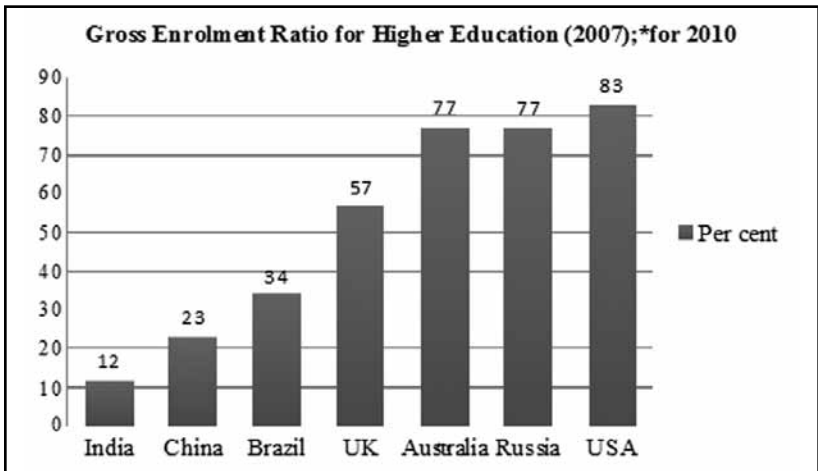


Figure 1: Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for Higher Education

Source: chinaeducenter.com, UNESCO Global Education Digest 2009; EY Analysis

The parliamentary committee on estimates has held the UGC primarily responsible for the ‘prevailing low standards of the majorities of the universities and colleges in the country’- only 30 percent of the universities and 10 percent of the colleges are of quality (The Economic Times, 2 August 2010, Sharma 2015). As of now no single Indian university ranks in top 100 universities

in the world. Ranking status of the universities has not improved yet due to adverse syllabus which is unable students to compete in world competition. Indian universities lag behind in innovation and imaginations. As a result, after the independence, only two Indian could win the noble prize in their respective field. Because, there are instances of plagiarism, repetition, duplication and mediocrity of research come to public notice. It reflects the lack of sincerity on the part of researchers, lack of vision of research supervisors, lack of qualitative facilities as well as lack of conducive environment (Sharma, 2015).

OECD Economic Survey India Report (2007) also points out that researcher from Indian universities published a very low number of articles in top-quality international journals (Sharma, 2015). It can be analyzed that there are no proper motivations from the UGC and self-motivation to write the articles and be a part of the knowledge production hub.

Higher Education and National Development:

In ancient times, Takshashila, Nalanda, and Vikramshila were the key higher educational institutions for developing higher minds. During the British period, first three universities were established in 1857 in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay to produce necessary bureaucratic staff for the colonial system with British attitude and mindset (Sharma, 2015). Brahmins were the first one who has benefited the English medium school. Teaching and pursuing the education was the right of Brahmins according to the Varnashrama system. After establishments, the key premier higher educational institution and other constitutional institutions were dominated by Brahmins. Institutions could not become a representative place for all the masses of the country. Though India has the third largest scientific and technical manpower in the world (After US and

China), yet it has the largest number of illiterate persons in the whole world. Its ambition to become a knowledge super power and a developed country by 2020 (as APJ Abdul Kalam's vision of India is) does not seem to be realistic and realizable because of pathologies of inaccessibility, poor quality, social and gender-inequity, irrelevance and lack of intellectual ambience in Indian universities and colleges (Sharma, 2015).

Development is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. It is not only an economic growth but also consist social, political, human development. Higher education is one of the parameters to develop the nation. Higher education magnificently improves the cognitive level of the students to perform in their respective field. Higher education provides an opportunity to critically look the social, political, economic and cultural issues which humanity faces. It also an advocate solves the issues through policy and planning. But it is a matter of what kind of higher education is provided to the students. The knowledge which is not based on epistemology creates turmoil among the students. Despite pursuing higher education many students are unemployed. This shows the failure of the higher education policies. For the peon post Ph.D. holders had applied. Graduates, postgraduates and Ph.D. holders were among the 23 lakh people who responded to an advertisement seeking applications for 368 posts of peons in the Uttar Pradesh Government secretariat. There were more than 1, 50,000 graduates applicants, 24, 969 applicants from postgraduates and almost more than 250 applicants from the Ph.D. holders (Hindustan Times, Sep 17, 2015). Higher educated students apply for the post of peon shows that the unemployment among the higher educated students. This shows the deterioration of the higher education.

Regarding accessibility, the best indicator is enrolment in higher educational institutions. Unfortunately, it ranges between

13 and 14 percent of eligible age group whereas it is, at present, 50 percent in developed countries on an average. In China, gross enrolment rate for higher education is 23 percent while in Japan it is 58 percent, in South Korea 50 percent plus, in UK 59 percent and US 82 percent (highest in the world). The government of India is aspiring for 30 percent enrolment by 2020. At present world, the average is in this regard in 23 percent. It appears that India will take several decades to reach the level of such enrolment prevailing in the UK (Sharma, 2015). The reasons of low enrolment ratio compared to other developed and developing countries like China and South Korea is that 70 percent of youth is under the 35 years and 54 percent of the population under 25 years. Accommodating a large number of students for higher education seems difficult. But it is ironical where other developed countries are spending their GDPs share in higher education is more as compare to India.

Recommendations:

- Innovations and imaginations are required in Indian universities.
- Public policy reforms are required.
- Programmed in the higher education should be relevant to societal needs.
- Educations institutions should have the aim of eradication of caste and creates just a society on moral social order.
- Higher educational institutions should be the hub of knowledge which will unravel the reality of the society and will provide possible solutions for the problems.
- Policy makers should make such policies where all the sections of the society will be included despite caste barrier, urban, rural, gender etc.

- Remedial coaching should be widely used in each and every university.

Conclusion:

Higher education in India needs a concrete plan to make it fully accessible, gender just and egalitarian. It should be relevant to the present nature of the problems of India and should work as a driving force for solving the problems. India did not reach to the highest level of its higher education. Indian higher educational institutions could not perform well in the world ranking system. Hence, there is no one single university in the top 100 universities.

The syllabus which has been adopted by the Indian universities is from the western countries. The Indian social system has not been taught widely in Indian universities which is based on hierarchy on the basis of caste, class, gender, ethnicity etc. Problems of the Indian social system can be solved through enlightened higher education which reveals the reality of caste and gender and creates the egalitarian society. In such a heterogeneous society, educational policies should be in favour to promote and sustain the values like, pluralism, respect for all human beings, scientific temper, an open mind and public reasoning. It is the state's responsibility to make them aware to the citizen of the country about their rights. Hence, education and especially higher education has a very important role to teach the rights of the citizen and prepare policies for the favour of the rights of the citizens. Politicization of the campus kills the spirit of scientific temper among the students. The psychological and emotional game is played with students and it's impacted negatively on all the students to understand the very idea of higher education.

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Seasonal Migration and Exclusion: Educational Experiences of children in Brick Kilns

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Abstract:

Distress seasonal migration appears to be a reality in almost all states in India, although to varying degrees. Poverty and lack of work in villages forces entire families to migrate for several months every year in search of work merely to survive. Migrants comprise the most vulnerable sections of society and especially those belong to Dalits and Tribal groups. In the process of seasonal migration, poor people along with their children uprooted from their homes year after year. Families lose the benefits of state welfare, they forgo the facilities of the public distribution system in the villages, cannot access the public health system and the immunization drive for young children that take place during the migration season. A large proportion of migrant labourers do not have their entitlement papers like caste certificates, election cards, Ration cards, Old Age Pension Cards and deprived from many welfare schemes. In the entire process, the lives of children are adversely affected. They are forced to drop out of school or never enrol in school at all. For children, the work environment means unusual harshness and deprivations. The present study is base on theseasonal migration of labourers from the state of Odisha to Telangana for Brick Kiln work. Hence, the present study tries to build an informed understanding of the nature and patterns of seasonal migration to brick kilns sectors. The paper tried to focus on the difficulties that children face with schooling at brick kiln sites and the conditions

under which children drop out of schools, as well as the response or lack of response of school systems for the right of migrant children to avail quality elementary education.

Introduction

Seasonal migration is a growing phenomenon in India. It is estimated that the number of internal migrants is four times higher than that of cross-border migrants (Human Development Report, 2009). In rural area, due to acute poverty and unavailability of work, people seasonally migrate to different parts of the country in search of work merely to survive. One such classic case is seasonal migration of labourers for brick kiln work from the Western region of Odisha. The western part of Odisha is the most undeveloped area India, especially the undivided KBK⁶ regions (Kalahandi, Balangir and Koraput Districts). In the process of migration labourers migrate to different states along with their children. Many studies suggest that temporary labour migration is a distress-driven strategy adopted by the poorest sections in the country (Bremar, 1978; Deshingkar & Start, 2003; Haberfeld, Menaria, Sahoo, & Vyas, 1999; Keshri & Bhagat, 2012; Mosse, Gupta, & Shah, 2005; Rogaly, 1998; Rogaly et al., 2001).

Data and Method

The present paper is based on ethnographic field work carried out for long five months in the brick kiln sites of Annaram village (in the periphery of Hyderabad) in Medak district of Teleganga. Qualitative data has been collected through casual conversation, opportunistic interview, informal group discussion and participant observation with brick kiln labourers, children and

6 Undivided Kalahandi, Balangir, Koraput districts are infamously known as KBK region. These districts of Southern and Western Odisha are regarded as the most backward region by the earliest planning commission of India.

other stakeholders engaged in brick kiln works. As the language of brick kiln labourers of western Odisha is Samblapuri data collected through audio recording have been transcribed and translated into English. After translation, the text of the transcription has been read out carefully and themes and sub-themes wise analysis has been done.

Process of Seasonal Migration:

The season of migration starts after harvesting of paddy in the western Odisha but in many cases migration started in the month of October. The seasonal migrant labourers work in the different brick kiln sites from the month of October to June cycle when the brick kiln works operate all over India. The brick kilns work do not operate and close down after approaching of the monsoon. It is well documented that people of KBK region lived in chronic poverty, indebtedness. The main festival of western Odisha is ‘Nuakhai’ most of the year the festival happens in the month of September. During the period of ‘Nuakhai’ festival Sardar (labour contractor/middle man) move different villages and contact prospective seasonal migrant labourers and provide them some advanced money. Poor people do not have any alternative option to repay borrowed money as well to celebrate Nuakhai festival, in compulsion they received the advanced money from the Sardar. As brick making work is team work they pay advanced money family wise on per head basis. Once poor people receive advanced money they make a commitment to Sardar to migrate for brick kilns work. “Even though a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Government of India (MoLE) and State Labour Department of the Governments of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh with the facilitation of the ILO to track the movement of migrant workers along with information on their employers/contractors/

agents etc”⁷. But in practice no labourer registers their name due forced of Sardar and unawareness of labourers about the provision. Although some labourers know about registration only male head of the family register their name. However, the entire family (besides old, differently abled dependent person) comprising of husband, wife and children migrate to the brick kilns and work as one team for the whole season of the functioning kiln. The movement of labour migration starts in the month of October. Sardar takes labourers in general coach of trains more than thousands of kilometers. Journey of labourers in train is very pathetic and painful. Many times they get tortured by both police and local rowdy in different stations.

A Sardar in the brick kiln sites of Annaram village explained the process of seasonal migration in the following ways.

The brick kiln owners contact us in the month of August/ September. We then visit village to village, door to door of the labourers and negotiate the deal with them. After that we pay advanced money to the labourers and we fix the date for their journey. Generally, we bring brick kilns labourers to Hyderabad by train in general coach. The train remains crowded at the time of supply of labourers to Hyderabad and other cities. The labourers just come as live luggage because there is no space at all in the bogies (General Coach). One cannot even go toilet. We pay money to police so they do not trouble to labourers. Traveling in train for brick labourers, women and girls are not safe. Young girls are frequently abducted and raped by the brick kiln owners as well as outsiders.

Reasons of Seasonal Migration:

There are different socio-economic factors for which people of

7 Labour Directorate, Government of Odisha. Signing of MoU with the Undivided Andhra Pradesh.

rural area migrate to different states for brick kiln work. Many of the studies indicates that the majority of rural labourers seasonally migrate in lean season due to low economic condition of family. Less land holding, less agricultural production, unemployment, underemployment and indebtedness are considered as major factors of seasonal migration of labourers to brick kiln work. Some of the broad reasons of seasonal migration to the brick kiln sectors discussed below:

Economic Factors:

In seasonal migration of labourers to the brick kiln sites, it is considered the relevance of non-economic factors as the reason of labour migration but many studies indicate that migration is primarily motivated by economic factors.

(Kainth, 2010, Majumder & Mukherjee, 2011 & Bag, 2011) stated in their studies that “both pull as well as push factors are responsible distress seasonal migration of labourers”. Push factors are the factors which compel poor people, because of various reasons, to leave their native place and move to some other place. For example, low productivity, joblessness and underdevelopment, poor economic conditions, lack of opportunities for advancement, collapse of natural resources and natural disasters may force people to leave their native place in search of better financial opportunities. The Pull factors are those factors which motivate the migrants to a region, such as, inducement of more amount of advanced money by the middle men in the origin sites (village) and weekly expenditure provided by the brick kiln owner at the work sites and opportunities of employment of younger children etc. There is debate among the researchers that which factors is more important for migration. But in present ethnographic research it was found that push factors as important reasons for the seasonal migration of labourers to brick kiln sites.

Lack of livelihood option in the Origin area:

People migrate seasonally due to the lack of alternative livelihood options after the harvest of the monsoon yield from the western part of Odisha. As for agriculture in the western part of Odisha and especially in KBK region people depend upon monsoon/rain water for cultivation. But most of the year due drought in the last part of rainy season small farmer/cultivator could not able to produce the required amount of paddy for maintenance of their family, which gives rise to food insecurity and indebtedness. This compels the entire family to migrate in search of work merely to survive. Seasonal migrant families/labourers do not have any alternative choices and they take their children along with them to the brick kiln sites. Children accompany their parents and partially become drop out of schools for major periods of the academic session and are forced into hard labour. There are also numerous pull factors for distress seasonal migration, including the high seasonal demand for manual labour in labour intensive sectors like brick kiln works (Deep, 2017).

In the brick kiln sites of Annaram village brick kiln labourers stated different reasons of their own seasonal migration as well as migration of their children.

It is found that many brick kilns Labours migrate merely to survive. People in the origin area, they do not have sufficient food to survive; they live a very miserable life in their village. So they become compelled to migrate for brick kiln work as for the brick kiln work they get advanced money at a time advanced money. Gandaram Chinda, a labourer who had been migrating to different states to brick kiln sites since last 25 year said that they migrated for brick kiln work because of hunger. They were not getting food to survive and they become compelled to migrate. In the words of Gandaram– *“Agee bhuke rahi jauthilu ar pindhbar*

lagi kapada bi nai milu nai thai". "We lived in hunger for days and we were to get clothes to wear; so we are migrating from brick kiln work every year". Likewise, women labourers explained that, they migrated to brick kiln sites because they had borrowed money from the money lender for the marriage of their daughter. So to repay the borrowed money they received advanced money from sardar and migrated to brick kiln sites.

Failure of MGNREGA:

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) which was launched on 7th September 2005 by the Government of India, is a pivotal legislation in the area of social security after independence. The NREGS scheme latter on has been re-titled as 'Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). This was legislated in 2005 to provide minimum 100 days guaranteed wage employment in every monetary year to the rural families who want to do unskillful physical work that includes creation of productive assets in the village such as wells, tanks, ponds and roads etc. (Parida, 2016). Since NREGS was designed to provide a floor to income through creating village assets and restricting distress migration of the poor households. Despite some success, it has failed to captivate seasonal distress migration, especially in the western part of Odisha. Similar findings have been found by (Jacob, 2008) and stated that; "The Rural Employment Scheme" has made practically zero influence on the livelihood security of the rural poor, especially in the KBK region of Odisha. There is no control in the level of distress migration of Dalit, Adivasis and Socially and Educationally Backward Class (SEBC) from Odisha's KBK region in search of livelihood in other parts of the country. The reasons of failures have been stated by seasonally migrant labourers in the following ways.

One labourer, Malaya Benipatria explained how the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) failed to help them and they become compelled to seasonally migrate for the brick kiln work. The labourers stated that– “*We work ‘Maat Bhua Kaam’ (MGNREGA) but our wage is paid very late. When we need the money most we don’t get that. That’s why we prefer to come for brick kiln work instead of working there in the village’.*”

As required, few people from the field explored the reason of their migration to brick kiln sites the labourers explained that; in the village there is availability of soil works in the village, but that is not beneficial for us. There is no certainty of wage there and that money is not sufficient to maintain a family. In the temptation of big amount of money at a time we migrate for brick kiln work. “*Milsi mati buha buhi kaam, hena nai pusaye, kete dine thare milba, paisa patar bi thik thak nai mile, mota paisar lagi palei asaba ke paduche.*”

Reason for Child Migration:

There are different reasons of child migration to the brick kiln sites. Sometime parents are responsible for migration of children and sometime children themselves are more or less responsible. In the majority of cases, parents have taken their children to the brick kiln site, and in some cases even if parents wanted to leave their children in their home or in their relative house, but some cases children stubborn and gnarled activities make their parents to take children to their work place or migration site. In the majority of cases, parents migrate along with their children because in brick kilns work parents desperately need the help of their children in different activities. Children also specifically migrate to take care their younger siblings, babies of their relatives and do household chores. So children migrate to brick kiln sites because of multifarious

reason and labourers parents/relatives engaged children as multi task workers in the brick kiln sites.

During interaction with a labourer ‘Chadrabhanu Mallick’, he explained that they had brought their children to the brick kiln site because in their family there was no one to look after their children in the village. Likewise, another brick kiln labourer explained that; ‘we had taken the advanced money from Sardar for five people and we have shortage of working members, if we will not bring our children for brick kiln work who will help us. So in compulsion we brought our children to the brick kiln sites’. As brick kiln making work is team work many parents need help of their children desperately and they seasonally migrate for brick kiln along with their children.

The Brick Kiln Work: Division of Jobs in the Brick Kilns:

Types of Worker	Function	Mode of Remuneration
Recruiter/Sardar (Male)	Recruit labourers, Pay advanced money to labourers, book tickets for labour and take labourers to the destination from their village.	Piece work: Commission per Pathariaand per volume of production of bricks
Work Supervisor/ Munshi:(Male)	Supervises the entire production process in the brick kilns, Keep records of numbers	Monthly basis

Types of Worker	Function	Mode of Remuneration
	of bricks produced by Patharias, Number of bricks transported by Buhali, etc.	
Makardam (Male)	Arranges the brick inside the kiln, fires bricks kilns.	Weekly wage
Transporters (Buhali): Man, Woman and Children	Carry and transport raw bricks from drying field to inside the kilns	Piece work: For every 1000 bricks 60 rupees
BhusaBuhali/ Dalu party: Man, Woman and Children	Pulverizes dust, coal over mud at rings	Through fixed advanced money only
Brick makers (Patharia) Works as a team with at least three People Man, Woman and Children	Moulds bricks and dry raw bricks, Make mud doughs and balls, Flips raw bricks, keep in sizes for counting.	Piece work: For every 1000 bricks 180-200 rupees the team gets.

Life Experiences of Children:

Children at the brick kiln site in one way or another participated in different works like making mud ball, drying raw

bricks, flipping bricks, moulding bricks etc. Children not only work for their own parents but also work with their relatives. Many a times children only work to get some eatable things. On several occasions if children negate to work due to any difficulty or any reason their parents scold and shout upon them. Even if some children were participating at the school, they were remaining busy with different household chores. Many of the children were taking care their own siblings as well as babies of their relatives. So the works of children in the brick kiln yards are multifarious and they were remaining busy with different sorts of work at different point of time. As a result children were deprived of of plays and lost their happiness of childhood period. At the brick kiln sites there was a high prevalence of alcoholism and drinking of local liquor and beers like Sidhi and Gudma. So from a very early age, many children become habituated to intoxicated drinking and that may affect their health negatively on their later life. The children as well as their parents were living in very pitiable condition at the small Gudsi⁸ and especially at the time of summer they were struggling to stay inside the Gudsi. Because of hard work not only children become tired and exhausted but they also experienced many health problems like fever, backache, chest pain, headache, difficulty in breathing, stomachache, skin ache, body rashes, bad cuts, small injuries and so on. They became tired and exhausted because of continuous hard work in very tender age. Due to unending work both day and night time children were deprived of sleep and suspire to have a sleep, but unfortunately they were unable to sleep. They also victimized of the vandalism and terror of the brick kiln owner. So the life of children at the brick kiln site was full of jinx and distasteful.

8 Gudsi is a small hut (Jhuggie) with bricks piled upon one another as well as straw covering the top which did not afford any protection against sun and rain. The height of Gudsis are near about 4 feet.

Educational Experiences of Children:

Seasonally migrant children are among the utmost educationally marginalized in India. The fundamental right of children to get a quality elementary education under the Right to Education Act (RTE, Act, 2009) of seasonally migrant children to the brick kiln sites remains compromised, as seasonal and temporary migration results in distraction of regular and continued schooling of children, adversely affecting their human resource development and contributing to the inter-generational transmission of poverty (Deep, 2017).

Education and leisure are very rare at the brick kiln sites of Annaram village. Although an NGO was functioning there for childcare and education, it was able to do bare minimum, that also for name's sake. There were no proper schooling facilities for the seasonal migrant brick kiln children in the Annaram village. Among children who were partially engaged in brick kiln work and participating in the schooling-centers, most children (60 percent) regularly attended the schooling-center and some children remained (40 percent) irregular or absent. In most cases, children were irregular and absent because of their participation in different works, and in very rare cases, children remained absent by their own choice. Some children not only remained absent from schooling-centers for many days, but did not attend them at all for the whole season. Such children were generally working as full-time labourers in brick kilns or were engaged in household chores the whole day. As seasonal migrant children remain absent from their regular school for seven to eight months, they forget whatever they studied earlier. In the brick kiln sites, many children, even forgot to write their name, irrespective of their classes studied. If children are unable to remember their name or the books of their classes, how could one expect them to remember whatever they have learned earlier. In the brick kiln

sites, many children were not able to attend the schooling-centre. Even among the children who attended the schooling-centers, their learning outcome was very dismal. The learning level of children was unsatisfactory. It was observed that children of Class V, Class VI, or Class VII also did not know basic mathematics, numbers and multiplication tables (Learning multiplication tables in these classes is considered a must in the state of Odisha). Their language skills were also very poor; they were unable to write their name in their mother tongue. Many children forgot what they had learned and also developed confusion between similar letters and numbers. This could be due to the long absence from their regular school in the village coupled with involvement with different varieties of work at brick kiln sites. The problem of low self-confidence was observed among the migrant children. Some children at the brick kiln site had known many things/ issues, but they had phobia in expressing due to low confidence level. They thought that if he or she will make any mistake, what the teacher will think or tell etc. Many children not attending schooling centers were interested in attending them but could not do so because of work. They were interested in study because they had studied in their village schools. Even if they wished to go to the schooling centers, their parents didn't allow them to go. Such children were of the view that when they see children of their age group going to schooling-centers, they also become interested in attending schools. Children in the brick kiln site attend different work like making mud ball, drying bricks and flipping bricks. Even if children were interested in attending the NGO-run schooling center, they could not attend because their parents desperately need their help. Brick kiln work needs engagement of a team or a family. Hence, the labourer-parents needed their children helping hand, and many times prohibited them from attending schooling centers. In brick kiln site, parents give

priority to work rather than to their children's education. Due to frequent seasonal migration many school-going children had lost their interest in the study. Their interest got diverted due to frequent migration to the brick kiln site. Many children dropped-out of school and many children were on the verge of dropping out. Gender bias was observed at the brick kiln site among the labourers of western Odisha. Many labourers left their sons in their native village in the care of their relative, so that their sons could continue their education without any interruption. On the other hand, many brick kiln labourer-parents had intentionally brought their daughters to engage them in child care, household chores and also to do the brick kiln work. Many labourers were sending their sons to schooling-center while their daughters of the same age group were not sent. Through interaction with children at the brick kilns, I found that many children had less aspiration for study as well for job. Many children said that they will follow their parents footsteps and work at the brick kiln site. At the brick kiln site, I observed negative aspiration of some children. Due to large scale enrolment drive, many children in the age groups of 6-14 are enrolled in schools, their names are present in the school registers, but many children are unable to attend physically because of frequent seasonal migration. Seasonal migration of labourers starts in the months of October-November, labourers work (along with their children) almost 6 to 7 months in different brick kiln sites. As a result, the children could not attend the school for most of the academic session. Likewise seasonal migrating children were not able to appear in the annual examination of their schools. Generally school annual examinations are held in March-April, when children are in brick kiln sites. But because of the non-detention policy, children get promoted to the next higher class. The non-detention policy in elementary education reduces the (official) drop-out rate among the

migrant children. However, some migrant children themselves feel that being promoted to higher classes is useless because learning is more important than promotion to higher classes. In the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan programme there is a provision for two school uniforms, textbooks for all girls, SC, ST and Below Poverty Line (BPL) category children (Ministry of Human Resource Development [MHRD], 2011). However, children at the brick kiln sites were deprived of all of these. Many children who were attending the schooling-center were of the view that the NGO's functioning was not catering to the needs of school-going children. The NGO was mainly meant for child-care and not for schooling children. But most of children attending different schooling-centers were school-going children and they were not getting much benefit by attending there. Most of the volunteer-teachers were under-qualified to teach school-going children. In the brick kiln sites, the location of schooling-centers was very unhospitable. Schooling-centers were situated in unpleasant places. It is now globally recognised that punishment in any form or kind in school restricts the development of the full potential of children. However, I observed that many volunteer-teachers who were ignorant of the legislation on corporal punishment of children used to beat children. Many parents in the brick kiln site did not consider education as necessary for the future of their children. Many children who had migrated for the first time were interested in continuing study, but their parents were not considering education as necessary for the future development of their children and they were not interested in sending their children to school

Conclusion:

It could be concluded that, the condition of seasonally migrant children to the brick kiln sites are very deplorable. They

lead a life of slavery in the brick kiln sites. Children remaining busy with different work, in the brick kiln sites and deprived of educational facilities. Many children working in the brick kiln sites were enrolled in their respective village school, but due to seasonal migration they were absent/ drop out of school for long 6 to 7 months. At the same time because of frequent seasonal migration many children become drop out of school before completing their elementary education. Not only children are deprived of educational facilities, but because of hard work at a very young age, they are prone to many health hazards and problems.

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Student Political Movement in India

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Abstract

The paper traces the history of student political activity in India since during the struggle for independence till the present time to contextualize how the campus political atmosphere has changed through the years, as well as how the student community has responded to it and vice versa. The aims of politics and activism in campus have undergone from many changes temporally and spatially in terms of focus and direction. Till independence in 1947, more-or-less all student groups, however different ideologically, had the common goal of attaining national freedom. However, post-1947, the enthusiasm and rigour died down, and the activism became sporadic and pertaining to local issues like better hostel facilities and infrastructure. The revival came in the 1970s when a National Emergency was imposed by the government then in power. After a few movements again in the 1980s-90s, the next big and contemporary event in student political discourse can be considered the emergence of student associations that affiliate themselves to an Ambedkarite ideology, i.e. the belief that neither the right-winged government nor the left-winged Marxist academics are empathetic enough to understand the role and implicit character of caste in everyday Indian life. These groups are formed by the 'under-represented' Dalit students, along with students from other minority communities like Muslims and tribes. Unlike the general trend in the country, these associations are not student bodies of any of the national political parties, neither are they backed up by any of them. While the changing demography of campus and a

rise in Dalit consciousness in society are seen as main influencing factors; the fact that they have been standing against the established parties in annual student union elections and even otherwise, and have been continuously increasing their support-base, makes for a significant event in the political history of the Indian campus.

The University Campus cannot be studied in physical and social isolation with the rest of the society. It is needed to be understood as comprising a significant as well as influential population that affects the society in multiple ways. It has undergone many changes to reach to the form that it exists in today. This change can be attributed to the change in the concept of education through the years. In the earlier times, education was thought of as interaction between teacher and student, to preserve in the child the natural goodness with which one is born. (Rousseau, 1979) However, this was countered by various scholars who argued that in modern societies, education is used as a tool to reproduce the existing socio-cultural and economic inequality. (Bourdieu, 1976 and Ogbu, 1982). Thus, while education has always been discriminatory in nature, now it has furthermore turned into something more professional, something whose aim is to do with “nation-building”, or even with building society, a capitalist society perhaps, in general.

According to Bourdieu (1973), education contributes to the reproduction of structure of distribution of cultural capital among the groups. The science of the reproduction of structures as a system of objective relations, impartstheir relation properties to individuals with their analytical recording of relations within a given population. “The relationships between the overt and covert knowledge taught in schools, the principles of selection and organization of that knowledge, and the criteria and modes of evaluation used to “measure success” in teaching.” (Apple, 1990)- all play a very important role when one sits to evaluate the different factors that

impact educational equality. Along with economic property, there also seems to be symbolic property—cultural capital—which education preserves and distributes. Thus, “institutions of cultural preservation and distribution like schools... (and universities) create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination.” (ibid.)

One of the biggest features of universities today is the participation of students in political activity. Although this has gathered immense curiosity, the academic work in this field has been less. Students, in higher education, constitute “a significant proportion of the rebellious elements in their respective societies. As such they play an important part in political life.” (Lipset, 1964) Students, being part of a potential elite, play a significant role as agents of social and political development, especially in the developing world where they constitute a vital and vocal segment of the population. They, despite being a numerically small population, constitute an intellectual elite which plays a vital role in influencing as well as modernizing “traditional” societies. (Hazary, 1987) The short span of time that students of higher education have in university, coupled with a critical thinking discourse especially in students of social sciences, instills in them an urgency to critically analyze and better the society. What differentiates students (in higher education) from rest of the society is that students are comparatively more spontaneous and assertive in their demands as they only stay in university for a few years. This can only be achieved by being in power or pressurizing and influencing those in power. Thus, in constant debates and discussions with peers and academic superiors, ideas of leadership and autonomy, questioning of merit coupled with concepts like social and cultural reproduction become daily parlance.

Student Political Participation in India:

In India, as in many other parts of the world, students in higher education constitute a miniscule numerical population that is considered an elite both in terms of intellect as well as power to form or influence state decisions. Youth have played a significant role in politics in pre-independence as well as post-independence times. In many of the previously colonized nations, students have had a long and highly articulated tradition of participation in political events. While on one hand, youth who had access to education became pioneers of Europeanization in their acceptance of progressive and radical standards of morality and social life; on the other hand, there was an inherent rejection of European imperialism which lent content to zealous nationalism. (Hazary, 1987). India, being no exception, also has had a long and chequered history of student activism. Since the colonizers regulated political activity immensely, strikes, demonstrations and terrorism became major forms of political activity for the youth in general and students in particular. Moreover, till 1947, by and large, despite the existence of a number of competing student organizations founded on ideological lines, the goal of national freedom remained common to all groups. The first All-India College Students' Conference (AICSC) was held in Nagpur in December 1920 under the presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai to provide coordination for the growing student political movement. Similar national student conferences were held throughout the 1920s and helped to keep the spark of the student movement alive. The AICSC provided Congressmen with leftist orientation with a platform and "the student movement was probably the most radical element in Indian political life during this period." (Altbach, 1974) The first national organization of students was founded in 1936, with the formation of All-India Students' Federation (AISF). It addressed a host of academic demands to the seven State Governments that

were then under Congress control. The All-India Muslim Students' Federation (AIMSF), founded in 1937 under the All-India Muslim League, was a counter to the nationalist and radical AISE. The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) was formed as a student wing of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on July 9, 1949. "The political tradition then [i.e. pre-independence] engendered has persisted into independence." (Lipset, 1964) Even after independence, students continue to be politically active despite many changes in the focus, direction, intensity and character of their politics. After 1947, the Congress leadership called upon students to depoliticise themselves by severing affiliation with political parties and harnessing their energy for constructive nation-building activities. While the Congress Party and Jan Sangh were in favour of keeping students away from party politics, leaders like Ram Manohar Lohia strongly advocated for campus politics and the role of students in bringing about social transformation. Eager to push students out of politics and into development work, Congress lost ground to the other parties, which in the meantime were winning student participation for electioneering work against the government and support for various movements against existing authorities. Post-Independence student activism in India has generally been based on sporadic regional or local and non-ideological issues. "In addition, when students have agitated about societal issues, these questions have also been of a relatively limited scope and did not have implications for basic social change in Indian society." (Altbach, 2012) ABVP became a significant force in campuses in the 1970s and at present is associated with the Ruling Party at the Centre.

The revival of student activism took place during the period of emergency, when students responded to Jayaprakash Narayan's call for total revolution. The students involved themselves in the huge number to fight against emergency. At that time, Student Unions

were silenced and many activist student leaders were arrested and tortured by the police. But as soon as Emergency was relaxed, a sizeable part of unrest in most of the campuses centred on emergency excesses. Since then, there was mass participation of students during the Mandal Commission Report and recently in the Anti-Corruption Movement and the ongoing Anti-Caste discrimination movements as well as the protests with the government on issues of Nationalism and Secularism.

SFI was established in 1970 and is the student wing of CPI(M) and AISA, the student wing of CPI-ML in 1990. The National Students' Union of India (NSUI) is the student wing of the Indian National Congress party, established on 9 April 1971. "Student politics has a programmatic dimension through its connections with political parties." (Rudolph et al, 1971) Student groups are divided on party lines and "the syndrome of the politics of mass violence which has characterized Indian politics is truly mirrored in campus politics." The involvement of outside political parties inside universities and colleges has destroyed their autonomy and academic atmosphere and stimulated political activism among students.

In the Indian context, campus, or university, politics does not come out of a monolithic base. Owing to the pluralistic society that is India, the number of operating groups becomes many and so do the number of their demands and priorities. Arising out of varied necessities thus, the student parties tend to have different ideologies. They may also be backed, ideologically and/or for other vested interest, by mainstream political parties (that contest elections at the regional or national level).

To understand this phenomenon better, variations in the university demography over the years also need to be looked at. Since the 1980s, primarily due to government policies, there have been many changes in universities. The number of Dalit-OBC

students has grown. According to 2008 data, of the total number of students in higher education in the country, 4 per cent were Scheduled Tribes, 13.5 percent Scheduled Castes (SC), and 35 per cent Other Backward Classes (OBC). Hindus accounted for about 85 percent of students, followed by Muslims (8 percent) and Christians (3 percent).⁹ However, the presence of students' organizations associated with political parties and led by these students on university campuses is still marginal and the reason for this is that most of these political parties are confined to one or two states. In contrast, the BJP, the Congress and the Left have a nationwide presence and that is why, their students' organizations are active on campuses all over the nation. However, very recently, Dalit student communities, under the umbrella of an Ambedkarite ideology, have started coming up in various colleges throughout the country. Such parties provide a challenge to the existing parties in that they come up from an ethnic base and represent a community which cannot find a voice in any of the other parties.

One of such associations include BAPSA-JNU in Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. BAPSA (Birsa-Ambedkar-Phule Student Association), in its own words, "is an independent student organization committed to unite socially, economically, politically and culturally oppressed students to fight uncompromisingly against Brahmanism and Capitalism, and to establish a society based on Equality, Liberty and Fraternity." One of the earliest of such associations is the Ambedkar Students' Association (ASA) in Hyderabad Central University. It was founded in 1993 by a small group of Dalit students at Hyderabad Central University. Although not stemming out from the same base as ASA Hyderabad Central University, Ambedkarite Students Association- Tata Institute of

9 <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/Discrimination-on-the-campus/article14019816.ece>

Social Sciences (ASA-TISS), Mumbai, Ambedkar University Dalit Student's Union (AUDSU), BBAU, Lucknow and other student organizations following an "Ambedkarite" ideology do consider themselves part of an alliance. Such groups are now in various campuses across the country, including the IITs.

In terms of aims, all the aforementioned want to mobilize a certain section of the student population in such a way that they can stand for themselves and fight for what they believe is rightfully theirs. This also implies questioning the existing education system, which they allege is Brahmanical in nature, and contradictory to the betterment of their lives. According to them, the present education system, at least in India, believes in consolidating the caste structure that exists in society. Thus, it is structured in a manner that cements the existing inequalities in society, much in agreement to the social and cultural reproduction in education theory as proposed by Bourdieu.

As most student associations in India tend to be more-or-less all student wings of political parties and are aimed at influencing their ideology and making students conform to them rather than critique the prevalent education system, the associations in question can be referred to as a change in the scene. For instance, BAPSA counters all existing parties; it has been independent and tries to be independent in the coming time too. Their reason is that the other parties do not represent them or their demands appropriately and thus they need leadership to come up from within them. Owing their origins to such background, this student association aims to break the hegemonic barrier created by the left and right wing intellectuals. The supposed reasons for the coming up of BAPSA, as mentioned by students (in news interviews and other online material), can be summed up in the following points:

- Disillusionment with left politics on campus

- Right-wing sympathies among left-wingers
- The inability of existing bodies to tackle growing casteism on campus
- The failure to fill up seats for reserved category students
- Lesser scores of students from lower castes in interviews and viva exams despite their otherwise good academic performance

The association is premised on the argument that both the above mentioned never cater to the needs of the Dalit (and other marginalized) community and “the campus still suffers from the casteist brand of student politics which is advocated by both left and right”. They mention the reason such an association had to come up as under-representation of the marginalized sections by the existing Leftist and Right Wing parties. “The Right Wing which projects and propagates regressive and inhuman ideology has always distorted the reality and history of marginalized sections in order to preserve and protect Brahminism. The so-called Leftist- Progressive movements which always have claimed as the vanguards and liberating forces of the oppressed sections have failed to address the question of caste both ideologically and politically and also refused to see the injustice that emanates from caste system.”

BAPSA emphasises the importance of lived experiences of the oppressed unity. The people belonging to this student organization believe in uniting the people from the oppressed and marginalized sections who for them are “the victims of the larger political structure and discrimination” of which women constituted an important part. Further they also emphasize the importance of giving both men and women within their party an equal political platform to showcase their activism and dedication and commitment to issues that are espoused by the party.

As part of their Ambedkarite politics, they feel that Western feminism cannot be representative of the issues and challenges faced by women in the Indian context where women possess heterogeneous identities of belonging to different religions, castes and regions. Hence for BAPSA, the need is to look at issues in their contextual and not in universal form.

The intellectuals and academicians affiliated to an Ambedkarite ideology question the existing knowledge system dominated by Caste Hindus. One of these include Dalit sociologists arguing that Indian social reality depicted till then by Indian sociologists was Brahminical and have been developing an alternative perspective i.e. 'Perspective from Below'. Dalit literature has its own historicity, continuity and dynamism, and thus have been changing their nature and scope with the changes in the socio-political conditions in the country and of the Dalits. Others advocate that Dalit consciousness in contemporary India is the manifestation of Dalit's search for modernization whereas Dalit consciousness in traditional India was a challenge to orthodox Brahmanism and Hindu values. "Dalit consciousness is a complex and compound consciousness which encapsulates deprivations stemming from inhuman conditions of material existence, powerlessness and ideological hegemony." (Oommen 1990:256) During 1920s -1950s Dalit mobilization was greatly concerned about forcible entry to Hindu temples, burning copies of Manusmriti, abandoning the services of indigenous priests governed by brahmanic values, production and the circulation of caste literatures; but in contemporary India, Dalit identity is more a matter of search for right, justice and equality.

Conclusively, it is interesting to note how the influence, or rather the perception, of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, as a person, has also seen a change in the process. Every student group in JNU- Birsas Ambedkar Phule Students' Association (BAPSA), Left groups such

as AISA, AISF, SFI and DSF, the Congress's NSUI and even the ABVP- has its own understanding of Ambedkar and what he stands for. While the Left believes Ambedkar's thoughts had nothing in counter with their ideology, they further argue that students belonging to the discussed Ambedkarite parties are themselves pseudo-Ambedkarites and lack a theoretical knowledge of the same. On the other hand, the Ambedkarite party members counter the aforementioned saying that till they brought Dr. Ambedkar into the picture, the other parties were blissfully ignorant of his existence. The extent of his influence can be seen by looking at BASO- Bhagat Singh Ambedkar Students Organization- who aim to see caste as a problem, within a class framework. Lastly, even ABVP uses Ambedkar's pictures in their posters. For them, Ambedkar being considered the Father of the Constitution is a nationalist icon, someone who believed in rashtrabhakti.

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