

RESPONSIBLE FACTORS BEHIND TRIBAL PRIMARY EDUCATION: A STUDY IN BAMONGOLA AND HABIBPUR BLOCK OF MALDA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

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Abstract:

In 45th Article of the Indian constitution it has been stated that every child of India between age group of 6-14 years will get free and compulsory education. We got our freedom about 70 years ago, but it is our common experience that we could not reach even this marginal level of education. Although some of the castes and religions have almost achieved this marginal level of education, but the tribal castes are far behind from this level. In many researches it has been found that some factors are responsible or causes behind the slow progress of education in tribal groups. In this paper the researcher has tried to find out the responsible factors or causes behind tribal education in Bamongola and Habippur blocks of Malda district. For this purpose a non-standardised tool for data collection was made. Data have been collected on the basis of objectives. After analyzing the data it has been found that superstition, economic condition and illiteracy are main reasons responsible for non-achievement of this level in their education.

Introduction

In the multi-ethnic society of India there are 400 odd distinct communities designated as tribes. Their place in society and the part they play in politics of the country are no less important than other groups or collectives entities. The relationship between tribal and non-tribal peoples, inter-tribal rivalries and their relationship with the state have been the recurrent themes of Indian social and political discourse.

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Education for all (EFA) is an international commitment to ensure that every child receives basic education of good quality. But education for all has not been given sufficient attention to some marginalized groups of children in some of the developing countries like India. Since independence Government of India has endeavoured to bring out development of the tribal communities from time to time in various plans the Govt and it made systematic strategies for their educational improvement and development. After independence special provisions were made in the constitution of India for social, economic and educational development of the tribal communities. Article 45 of the constitution of India directs that free and compulsory education should be provided for all children between the age group of 6-14 years. Article 46 of the Indian constitution also directs that promotion of educational and economic interests of Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other weaker sections of the country and shall be protected from social injustice and all forms of exploitations.

In respect of educational progress, it has been the national endeavour to spread education among the masses. Despite having taken several measures by the central and state Govt. in pursuance of the directives of the constitution to spread education among the tribal communities, it has not been possible to realize fully the goal of universal primary education. There still exists a wide educational gap between the tribal communities and other communities in India.

The tribals constitute about 8% of the country's total population. According to 2011 census the tribal literacy rate in West Bengal was 57.92% (Male: 68.16% & Female: 47.71%) and in Malda district 46.86% (Male: 55.83% & Female: 37.86%), although the rate of literacy varies from region to region and community to community. Even a large segment of population is still illiterate and those who are literate are just up to the primary level as per their certificate but they still cannot read and write properly.

Tribes and their characteristics

About 8% of India's population consists of tribal people, distributed though unevenly throughout the length and breadth of the country (Census of India, 2011). They also have different social, political, and economic levels. These differences can be seen in terms of hill tribes and plains people and those engaged in forest-based economic pursuits and the ones who are employed as settled agriculturalists or those who are Hinduised or converted to Christianity or those who seek to adhere to their unadulterated tribal way of life. There are for example, the indigenous tribes of the Andaman islands – Onga, Jarawa and others-who until the 19th century remained almost completely isolated from the mainland and therefore were unaffected by what N.K. Bose (1971) called the Hindu method of tribal absorption. The tribes of India prior to independence were considered animistic by the census authorities. Distinction was made between those who were Hinduised and those who followed their own religion. Some scholars have opined that no sharp line of demarcation can be drawn between Hinduism and Animism. There is no uniform pattern of religion among the tribal peoples of India. Mandelbaum (Refer to Kochhar, 1995) mentions eight characteristics of Indian tribes:

1. Kinship as an instrument of social bonds
2. Lack of hierarchy among individuals and groups (class and lineages)
3. Absence of strong, complex, and formal organizations.
4. Communitarian basis of land holding
5. Little value on surplus accumulation
6. A tribe is a segmental organization. Each unit of the tribal society is held to be autonomous, similar in function bond status to any other segment of the tribal society. Lack of distinction between form and substance of religion.
7. Different psychological make-up for enjoying life.

8. A tribe is a congeries of equal kin group blocks. The principle links for the whole society are based on kinship. They are often the principal units for landownership, for defence, for economic production and consumption.
9. A tribe being composed of a number of equivalent, unspecialized multifamily groups does not usually have strong, complex formations. The tribal people believe in tribal solidarity.
10. Tribal people do not differentiate between short-term pragmatic functions (for personal benefit, for immediate needs, for individual welfare) and long-term transcendental functions of religion.
11. Tribesmen are generally given to have enjoyment of life. Generally, they like direct, unalloyed satisfaction in sensual pleasures, whether in food, alcoholic drink, sex, song, dance etc.

The above may be taken as the broad outline of the features of a tribal society. Tribal society is homogeneous, undifferentiated and un-stratified in contrast to Hindu society which is heterogeneous, differentiated and stratified. But tribes in India differ in social organizations and cultural patterns. Tribal who have become peasants and are engaged in allied occupations do not constitute a homogenous un-stratified society. Members of a tribe may not perceive it, but each tribe is internally stratified.

Review of literature

Admin (2010) have worked on the dimensional problem of tribal students in India with special reference to Kerala state. He found that tribal fathers are addicts to alcoholic drinks and other beverage items creating some problems mentally and economically, in the end result students will fail in examinations. Kumari, Devi and Rani (2009) have conducted a study on impact of mid-day meal programme in tribal areas of Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh and found that the mid-day meal programme has remarkable improved the school attendance, eating habits of children and academic performance as perceived by teachers. Mohanty and Biswal (2009) undertook a study on primary education in tribal India experiencing from eastern Indian states. They found that the attendance percentage of scheduled tribe students in both the govt and non-govt schools is much less than the non-schedule tribe students. Regarding the quality of mid-day meals provided to the students, 55.86 per cent of the teachers of the Govt. Schools of Sundergarh district against 64.29 per cent of them belonging to the district of Raigarh opine that it is not good.

Russell and Lim (2008) found that students from a lower socio-economic status were more likely to dropout from school than a student from a higher socio-economic status. They also found that students who work more than 20 hours a week are more at the risk of dropout. Mohanbhai (1998) who studied the impact of mid-day meal programme among Scheduled Tribe (ST) students of primary schools in Gujarat, found that enrolment and average attendance of scheduled tribe student's increased and dropout rate decreased in primary schools. Mishra (1996) conducted a study on the strategies of tribal education for intervention. He found no special training on tribal languages, cultures or current problems was imparted to the teachers serving in tribal area and children were contributing their manual power to supplement the family income.

Objectives of the study

The study has been initiated to fulfil the following objectives:

1. To study socio-economic conditions of the tribal families of both blocks.
2. To explore the causal factors of dropouts among tribal students at primary level.

3. To compare the attitude of male and female teachers towards the factors responsible for falling of the standard of tribal primary education.

Hypothesis

Keeping in view the objectives of the study, the following hypothesis were taken into consideration:

- HO1: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female teachers towards the Socio-economic condition of the family.
- HO2: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female teachers towards Illiteracy of parents.
- HO3: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female teachers towards Superstition among tribal parents.
- HO4: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female teachers towards school related causes.

Methodology

For conducting this study a survey research method was used. The researcher made a non-standardised questionnaire for male and female teachers and a separate questionnaire for the tribal guardians. A number of 5 primary schools from each block (Bamongola and Habibpur) of Malda district were taken into consideration with boys and girls of standard I-IV. 35 male and 35 female teachers were selected through stratified random sampling method. In order to conduct this study the investigator prepared a self-framed non-standardised questionnaire, interview schedule and a check list to enquire about educational facilities available for students. The data was analyzed by using statistical techniques like t-test and percentage.

Result and discussion

Different kinds of information were collected through the questionnaire for teachers, checklist for headmasters and interview with students and parents. The analysis and interpretation of the collected data is as follows:

Table: 1

Comparison of the opinion of male and female teachers towards the factors

Factors affecting standard of primary education	Teacher (Male/Female)	Number (N) = 70	Mean (M)	SD	df	t-value	Significant Level
Economic condition of family	Male	35	30	3.38	68	0.19	Accepted at 0.005
	Female	35	29.82	3.46			
Illiteracy of parents	Male	35	27.45	4.39	68	2.39	Accepted at 0.005
	Female	35	29.65	3.14			
Superstitions of Parents	Male	35	18.54	3.21	68	1.00	Accepted at 0.005
	Female	35	19.25	2.64			
School Related Causes	Male	35	25.60	8.08	68	1.90	Accepted at 0.005
	Female	35	22.11	7.01			

Table: 1 reveals that there is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female primary teachers towards the factors namely economic condition of family and illiteracy of parents

There is also no significant difference between the opinion of male and female primary teachers towards the factors namely superstitions of parents and school related causes. Hence the hypothesis is accepted for all the factors namely economic condition of family and illiteracy of parents, superstitions of parents and school related causes. So it may be concluded that there is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female teachers about economic condition, illiteracy of parents, superstitions and school related causes.

Table: 2
Causes of dropout in schools

Sl. No.	Related Causes	Habibpur	Bamongola	Total
1.	House work	02(10%)	04(20%)	06(15%)
2.	Poor economic condition	08(40%)	06(30%)	14(35%)
3.	Migration of students	03(15%)	02(10%)	05(12.5%)
4.	Lack of interests in Education	03(15%)	05(25%)	08(20%)
5.	Care of his/her brother & sister	04(20%)	03(15%)	07(17.5%)
Total		20	20	40

Source: Field Survey by the author

Table: 2 mentions about the causes of dropout among the tribal students of Habibpur and Bamongola block of Malda district known as tribal colonized area. The data was found from the headmasters of concerned schools in both the blocks. The headmasters have pointed out mostly five factors that are responsible for causes of dropouts among the tribal students in both blocks. 35% headmasters have pointed out the poor economic condition of parents is the deep rooted cause for dropouts. 20% headmasters have pointed out that lack of interest in education is the cause of dropout in schools. 17.50% headmasters have pointed out that children are engaged to look after his/her younger brother/sister when the adult members of the family are engaged in productive or other activities. 15% headmasters have opined that housework is another cause of dropout. Whereas 12.50% headmasters have pointed out that migration of parents is also another cause of dropout among tribal students.

Table: 3
Annual income and occupation of parents

Occupation	Annual income (in Rs.)					Total
	Up to Rs. 10,000	Rs. 10,001 to 15,000	Rs. 15,001 to 25,000	Rs. 25,001 to 50,000	Above Rs. 50,000	
Farming	13 (54.16%) (36.11%)	07 (29.16%) (41.17%)	02 (8.33%) (22.22%)	01 (4.16%) (16.66%)	01 (4.16%) (50%)	24 (34.28%)
Private Sector	04 (33.33%) (11.11%)	03 (25%) (17.64%)	03 (25%) (33.33%)	01 (8.33%) (16.66%)	01 (8.33%) (50%)	12 (17.14%)
Wage Labour	19 (76%) (52.77%)	03 (12%) (17.64%)	01 (4%) (11.11%)	02 (8%) (33.33%)	-	25 (35.71%)
Govt. Service	-	04 (44.44%) (23.52%)	03 (33.33%) (33.33%)	02 (22.22%) (33.33%)	-	09 (12.85%)
Total	36 (51.42%)	17 (24.28%)	09 (12.85%)	06 (8.57%)	02 (2.85%)	70

Source: Field Survey by the author

Table 3 shows that 19 (52.77%) families are working as daily labour and their occupation belongs to the lowest annual income group up to Rs. 10,000 and 13 (36.11%) families have farming as their occupation and belong to lowest annual income up to Rs. 10,000. There are 04 (33.33%) families belonging to the income up to Rs. 10,000 and depend on private services. Only 09 (12.85%) families belong to the income groups who have Government service. In general, 36 (51.42%) families out of 70 (100%) families of the selected sample belong to the low income group (up to Rs.10,000). This indicates that income of parents or family is one of the main causes of their children's dropout.

Recommendation

It is justifiably hoped that delivery of primary education would substantially improve in tribal areas of the whole country, if steps are taken on priority basis in the following direction:

1. To improve attendance of the tribal students, more number of residential ashram schools is opened in the tribal areas.
2. To reduce dropout rate of tribal children, the teachers should establish a healthy rapport with the tribal students and create a positive environment for them.
3. The teachers appointed in tribal area should be given local tribal language training.
4. The appointed teachers should have the knowledge about the local tribal traditions and their culture.
5. Special incentives and allowances should be provided to the teachers working in the tribal areas.
6. Most of the tribal parents are illiterate so, awareness campaign programmes should be conducted in each and every tribal village on priority basis.

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