

**TRIBAL EDUCATION IN BUNDU BLOCK (POTHOLES
IN THE ROAD TO PROGRESS) A SOCIOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS**

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Abstract

Education is an indispensable part of the life of every human being. The importance of education has been recognized for transformation and development. In the state of Jharkhand, which consists of a huge tribal population that is exploited and plagued by ignorance, dissemination of quality education has posed to be a problem of colossal proportions. In this paper, a comprehensive effort has been made to understand the quality of education imparted to the tribal population of Kanchi village in the Bundu block of Ranchi, Jharkhand. The quality of education has been thoroughly assessed on the basis of availability of teachers, student-teacher ratio, student attendance, availability of text-books, attitude of parents with respect to importance of education, environment in classroom and several other parameters. Education among tribals is the only way of ensuring their holistic development, ensuring their emancipation from drudgery and bringing them on par with mainstream society.

Keywords

Tribal population, Kanchi village, Ignorance, Quality of Education, Development, Mainstream Society.

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Table of Contents

1. Chapter 1

Introduction.....3

2. Chapter 2

Research Methodology.....5

3. Chapter 3

Data Interpretation and Analysis

-Section 1: General Information about Students of the School.....7

-Section 2: Multidimensional Internal and External Reasons for Low Attendance, Absenteeism, and Out-of-School Tribal Children.....8

-Section 3: Linkages between Tribal Education and Development.....9

-Section 4: Teacher's Inputs and Participation of Parents and Children.....10

4. Chapter 4

Concluding Remarks

Summary of the findings.....12

Recommendations.....13

5. **References**14

Chapter: 1**Introduction**

Education is indispensable for helping tribal people cope with national integration. Education will also determine their prosperity, success and security in life. The tribes which remain either deprived of or negligent toward education will suffer the consequence. Despite implementation of various welfare programmes, low level of literacy and education plagues majority of tribal children in Jharkhand. The state of Jharkhand is a pot-boiler of the tribal movement for development and progress. However, tribal children continue to face a dearth of educational facilities to broaden their horizons.

Tribal education is particularly important for the survival of tribals, paving a way for their holistic development free from exploitation and dark ignorance. Education among tribals is a must for their upliftment as it is a potent agent of development bringing tangible benefits like skills for successful occupations, decent living standards, unveiling of ignorance and opportunities for securing adequate livelihood. No meaningful development of the underprivileged tribal population can take place without enhancement of literacy and promotion of education standards. Tribal education can be promoted by active participation of the tribal communities, quality teachers and inquisitive students who should have the sole responsibility of getting educated without worries about income generation, poverty, seasonal occupational migration and running of the household. Education for tribals must be a fine balance between cultural context learning and modern education, ensuring that tribal children remain on par with children of mainstream society. Educating tribals is the only meaningful way to bring them out of their drudgery which has been plaguing generation after generation of young tribal minds.

This research paper analyses the various aspects regarding education of tribal children with special reference to Kanchi, a village in the Ranchi district of Jharkhand state. The same location has been used for the purpose of field survey and data collection.

Statement of the Problem:

Education among tribals is a growing concern in our nation. Previously neglected by mainstream society, tribals are now paving the way for their development through their own genius. The first

step toward development is education. Jharkhand being a state dominated by tribal population, spread of education and assessment of educational facilities is important especially at the grass-root level, i.e., at the level of villages. The village of Kanchi, from where information was collected to facilitate completion of this paper, comes under Bundu block of Ranchi, the capital city of Jharkhand. It is situated around 40 km south-west from the state capital which is also the district head quarter. It is around 2 km away from the national highway to Jamshedpur. The geographical location of this village suggests that it is not an interior village. The majority of the village population is involved in agriculture while a small percentage of people have small businesses. This research is aimed at assessing the level of education and its quality which is provided to tribal children in Kanchi, who are often first-generation learners. This research is also aimed at understanding the impediments that the school in this village- Government Middle School- has to face in its day-to-day functioning, i.e., the potholes in the road of development to attain literacy and education.

Chapter: 2

Research Methodology

1. Objectives of proposed study:

The main and veiled objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To explore the consequences of low literacy rates and education among tribal children in Kanchi village.
- To examine the multidimensional internal and external reasons for school dropouts, low school attendance and out-of-school tribal children.
- To understand the linkages between tribal education and tribal development.
- To examine the role of teacher's inputs and active participation of students and parents for facilitation of education among tribals.

2. Hypotheses:

The assumptions for the configuration of the proposed study are as follows:

- Education is one of the primary agents of transformation towards development.
- Education of tribal children is adversely affected due to issues regarding language of instruction.
- Education among tribal children is hampered due to lack of knowledge among parents about the importance of education, lack of transportation facilities, burden to earn income for family, etc.
- Good teachers prefer to work in semi-urban or urban areas and not remote tribal areas, leading to dissatisfactory quality of education.
- Children remain unaware of school curriculum due to lack of text books and materials which take a long time to arrive at the schools.

3. Universe/ Population of Study:

The Universe/ Population of this research are the school students and teachers. Since the study focuses on the tribal population of Jharkhand, mostly tribal people- teachers and students constitute the universe or population of the study.

4. Research Design:

The present research is designed along with the lines of *explanatory research design*. In explanatory research design the researcher tends to explain the situation which forms the research issue on the basis of some pre-assumptions or hypothesis.

5. Sampling and its size:

Stratified Random Sampling (where the whole population is divided into homogenous groups and sample is drawn from each stratum at random basis) will be used where the population will be divided into tribal students and teachers (based on occupation) and among students based on gender- male students and female students. Sample size will be 6 male students and 6 female students from school and 3 core subject teachers from the school.

6. Method of data collection:

Due to the uncertainty regarding the level of literacy among the population (i.e. the tribal students) of the study, the method of interview schedule (an interview with pre-coded questions to produce quick and highly reliable data) will be used for efficient data collection.

7. Limitation of the study:

The limitations faced by the researcher during the completion of this study are as follows:

- Less number of teachers to interview due to the shortage of teachers in the school.
- Less number of students to interview due to celebration of a tribal festival which caused absenteeism.
- Time constraints relating to collection of information.
- Difficulties in making some students, who are young, understand the meaning and depth of the questions asked.
- Reluctance among some students to answer questions.

Chapter: 3**Data Interpretation and Analysis**

Section 1:

General Information regarding the Students of the School

1. Sex Ratio of Students at the School:

The overall sex ratio of the school (co-education) is healthy with 149 boys and 129 girls studying from 1st standard to 8th standard. Girls seem to be on an equal footing with boys in terms of academics, sports and cultural activities.

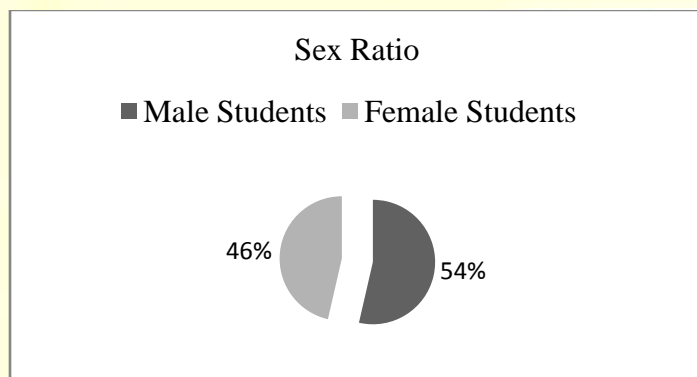


Fig 1: Sex Ratio of Students at the School

This healthy sex ratio of students comprising the strength of the school reflects the positive outlook of the village residents to educate girls and boys equally so as to obtain good occupations later on in life. Residents of this village are also eager to make sure their girl child receives education and regularly attends school. Girls were also seen playing in the play ground with boys, sharing healthy competition. The number of female student respondents was 6, the same being in the case of respondents among male students. These students came from families of different socio-economic backgrounds sharing a common education but different aspirations.

2. Level of Literacy of Students before Joining School:

Of all the 12 student respondents, three had very low level of literacy (2 male students and 1 female student). They could barely remember numbers and alphabets. However, the other respondents were quick to read, write and talk. The headmaster of the school Mr. P.S Munda reported that before joining school most of the students had very poor level of literacy, but had later picked up pace and were able to manage their academics well showing satisfactory learning capacity (though constant help from teachers was required). The teachers who were interviewed (3 teachers out of a total of 6 in the entire school) stated that the interactive teaching environment

of the school helped engage the interest of the students, most of who had poor level of literacy while some had satisfactory level of literacy.

3. Level of Awareness among Parents regarding Importance of Education:

It is quite interesting to note that all the 3 teachers interviewed answered that parents of students in this village had high level of awareness regarding the importance of education in their child's life and future. The parents were eager to receive feedback about their child's performance and all of the parents were keen on their child, be it girl or boy, to attain good jobs by securing higher education.

Section 2:

Multidimensional Internal and External Reasons for Low attendance, Absenteeism and Out-of-School Tribal Children

1. Performance of Household Chores or Paid Work by Students:

It is important to note that none of the student respondents (6 male students and 6 female students), be it girl or boy, performed neither any kind of paid work nor contributed to the income of the family. This reflects that child labour was not in practice in the village and a child's need for education was recognised as having maximum importance. None of the students were burdened with earning a living for the family and their sole responsibility was their academics. However, all the female student respondents helped out in household chores such as fetching water, washing dishes, cleaning the home, etc. Only a few male students' respondents helped out with household chores (only 2 male students performed household chores). When asked from the students who engaged in household chores as to whether these chores adversely affected or encroached on their study time they replied in the negative. They replied that they and their parents ensured that a specific time was spent on completion of homework and self-study.

2. Medium of Instruction:

The medium of instruction at the school is mostly Hindi. All of the 12 student respondents could speak Hindi fluently and read and write in Hindi as well. The teachers mentioned that when new students joined the school, some of them could not understand Hindi, so the teachers would switch to the tribal languages spoken in the village- Mundari and Panchparganya- to help the students understand the lessons taught. The students said that they had no problem regarding the medium of instruction as their teachers were quite flexible and knowledgeable of the tribal

languages spoken in the area. The textbooks given to the students used to be in Panchparganya but with the trend of most students being fluent with Hindi, the government had started providing textbooks in Hindi.

3. Other Reasons Acting as Impediments to Attending School:

A number of other reasons which cause low attendance among students were stated by the student respondents. As the school is located in the heart of the village, most of the students face no problem regarding distance from home to school. However, 2 male student respondents mentioned that they were not able to attend classes regularly due to the long distance between the school and their homes. Out of the 6 male students, 3 said that the teachers punished severely in case of insubordination or mischief. They stated that this treatment by the teachers instilled a fear in them with respect to attending school and hence, they avoided attending school at times. None of the students said that there was any lack of interest in the teachers regarding their academics and all of them found learning interactive at the school.

Section: 3

Linkages between Tribal Education and Development

1. Availability of Scholarships:

The school in Kanchi provides free education till 8th standard to any student who takes admission. But besides providing free education, the school also facilitates the provision of scholarship given by the Jharkhand State Government to students of government schools. The scholarship, named the Medha Pratiyogita, is given to the top 3 scoring students from each standard. The student who is eligible for this scholarship is provided with a form by the school. The scholarship includes a sum of Rs. 2000 to each student after approval by the State Government authorities.

2. Awareness of Education:

The teachers and headmaster of the school made some interesting points regarding the spread of education in the village. Now with 2 fully functioning government schools and a few colleges nearby, the awareness with respect to education has drastically increased since the last decade. Parents have understood that a good education is a mean to prevent drudgery and poverty as it helps in overall development of a child, helps the child avail better opportunities in the future, facilitates understanding of welfare schemes of health, food, etc to better a person's life and improve the general standards of living. The teachers and headmaster reiterated that the

eagerness among residents of the village to send their children to school has increased and the provision of mid-day meals had increased the number of children attending school and anganwadi centres.

Section: 4

Teacher's Inputs and Participation of Parents and Children

1. Environment in the Classroom:

The learning and interactive environment of the classroom plays a very important role in instilling an importance of education in a child. In this school, the student respondents reported that they found the environment of the classroom student-friendly. Teachers engaged the students in group activities, asked questions, used local tribal folklore, thoughts and regularly gave homework and assignment to the students to create interest and association with learning. Examinations were conducted on a regular basis with students giving examinations half-yearly and annually to proceed to the next standard. There was no lack of stationary such as notebooks, pens, pencils, geometric sets and each classroom had a blackboard and chalks to facilitate continuous learning. The teachers needed to be TAT qualified to be appointed in this school. Only a few students found the environment of the school disturbed at times because of vandalism by rogue boys from another village and lack of sport equipments.

2. Parent- Teacher Association:

Parents' knowing about the performance of their child in school is important for developing keenness among children with respect to academics. The student respondents stated that at the end of every year they were given a grade card which was to be shown to their parents. The parents were kept informed about the academic progress of their child and this was ensured by the teachers. The parents received regular feedback regarding the behaviour of their child in school. Regular meetings took place between the parents and teachers. Parents were also invited to watch the annual day functions and other cultural activities performed.

3. Co-curricular Activities:

A range of co-curricular activities were offered by the school to ensure overall development of students. The co-curricular activities ranged from sports to cultural activities such as singing, dancing and drama. All of the male student respondents engaged in sports while the female student respondents engaged in almost all the co-curricular activities. The headmaster stated that

cultural activities usually took place on Saturdays after school hours, while students were allowed to play cricket, football, etc, during P.T hours and lunch break. The female students also played football along with their male counterparts.

4. Shortage of Teachers:

A major difficulty faced by this school in its normal functioning is a dire shortage of teachers. For a total strength of 278 students, there are only 6 teachers to cater learning. At the time of interview most of the children were on the playground playing football while others were talking. Only a few were in the classrooms and there were only 3 teachers to manage the students. Shortage of teachers is a colossal problem as the students unnecessarily attend school, waste their time and go back home, without learning anything of value. The very purpose of school is defeated when there is a shortage of teachers as the students fail to learn anything and their time also fails to be used meaningfully. The standard teacher-student ratio of a healthy classroom is 1:40 but in this school the teacher-student ratio is 1:46.33. And it was reported by the headmaster that teacher absenteeism was also rampant due to strikes, bands and roadblocks declared by Naxalities and tribal festivals which made it difficult to attend school regularly. Due to shortage of teachers as well as their absenteeism the students were mostly seen running around aimlessly. This is a highly sad state of affairs.

Chapter: 4**Concluding Remarks**

Summary of the Findings

After analysis and interpretation of the collected data, various positive and negative points can be inferred about the functioning of Government Middle School, Kanchi. Keeping in mind the objectives of the research study the summary of findings are as follows:

1. Poverty- Main Cause of Low Strength of the School:

The village of Kanchi is plagued by poverty. There is a wide gap between the rich and poor of the village. The well-off families lived in pukka houses, while the majority of village population lived in poorly maintained kachcha houses. This reflects the rampant poverty prevailing in this village. This is the main reason why other children of the village do not attend school. Poverty is the only factor which prevents children of this village from attending school. Other reasons such as language problems, seasonal migration, and lack of awareness regarding education do not play any role in preventing children from attending school. Most of the children who do not attend school help in household chores and caring of younger siblings while the parents work in fields or shops. Hence, the strength of the school is only 278 students while there are many more children in need of education in this village.

2. Healthy Sex- Ratio at the School:

The healthy sex ratio (male students and female students) prevalent in the school is a positive sign of progress. This kind of progress is reflected in this school of Kanchi village. The residents of this village were open to sending their girl child to school as they acknowledged the significance of education in their child's life. The changing of yester-year narrow mind frames to broadening of horizons and widening of understanding regarding the importance of education for both boys as well as girls is a step away from poverty and towards development.

3. Low-Attendance at the School:

Regular attendance at the school was quite low. Several factors played a role, causing low attendance. Students were often absent from school for days whenever time of a tribal festival arrived. Distance between school and homes of some students serves as a main impediment for low attendance. Means of transport are irregular and unsafe. A few buses and auto on a sharing basis are the only means of transport available to students who have to travel long distance to

attend school. Some students had a fear of attending school due to severity of punishments when they behaved inappropriately.

4. Conducive Environment of Classroom Defeated due to Shortage of Teachers:

The general environment of the classrooms according to the student respondents was conducive to learning. They had no difficulty in understanding their lessons and stated that they were helped by their teachers in case of doubt. According to the respondents, learning in classrooms, when it took place, was fun and interactive. But these positive points seem to be defeated as there is a shortage of teachers in the school. When the number of teachers is low, learning can take place in a very limited and constricted manner. Only a limited number of students are able to gain meaningful knowledge as the teachers are able to concentrate and take classes only up to a certain extent. The other students waste their time aimlessly. The ratio of teacher and student is not healthy for continuous learning in this school.

Recommendations

Various pertinent recommendations can be stated, taking into view the level and quality of education in the village of Kanchi. A fully-functioning school is a positive sign that indicates development in the village. The infrastructure of the school was in tatters, with only a few classrooms fit for teaching. There should be a renovation of the basic infrastructure of the school through help from the government. The learning environment of the school was conducive but the problem of shortage of teachers must be solved and the headmaster should request the State Government authorities for recruitment of teachers. Another point to be recommended is that at least to some extent the tribal students should be taught English as it will be beneficial in future. More number of tribal teachers should be appointed at the school so that they use motivational and permissive approach to teaching tribal students of the village. The school should also start classes that impart skills and modern information on agriculture, poultry, forestry and carpentry. The school needs to ensure that the education imparted to the tribal students is on an equal footing with non-tribals. An attitudinal change is taking place among tribals with respect to the importance of primary and secondary education and this change must be encouraged to its truest potential.

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