

Alternative Education Processes of Tribal's in Chhattisgarh

Dr. Ayan Hazra

Assistant Professor, School of Juridical and Social Sciences, Hidayatullah National Law University.

New Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

Email - ayanhaz@gmail.com, ayan123123@rediffmai.com

Abstract: *In today's context, education is synonymous with formal education, which involves teaching conducted in a school, based on a State-guided curriculum, imparted by teachers formally employed and trained for the job. The Jan Rapats broaden this definition to include not only school education, but all learning, knowledge and information that people acquire over the course of their life. Knowledge encompasses wisdom (gyaan), information (jaankaari), and education (vidya or shiksha). In analysing knowledge, therefore, it is important to explore the local systems of knowledge and education. While knowledge can be explored in all aspects of life, including knowledge systems with respect to livelihoods, health, social, political and economic institutions, customs and traditions, education is important in enhancing human development. Formal education builds capabilities that enable people to avail of opportunities both at home and outside. It is a process that develops self-reliance and self-esteem, so that a person can negotiate the world with skill and understanding.*

Key Words: *Traditional Knowledge, Information, Literacy, Community mobilisation.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

'Learning for empowerment' is a phrase so often quoted in literacy programme reports that we may no longer stop to think what it really means. This case study however takes us into what 'empowerment' means to young women and men living in tribal communities in Chhattisgarh of central India.

The tribal societies are extremely closed and isolated societies living in compact groups. More often than not they have very low or very bad contact points with communities outside their own. In most cases the contact points are middlemen, contractors, petty traders or the lower level functionaries of the forest, revenue and police administrations. In all the cases the contact is invariably a bad contact, as the tribal, invariably, is on the losing end in this relationship, where the tribal is invariably the employee, as a labourer on construction works, on farms of progressive farmers. The third type of contact is with the teacher, wherever schools exist. More often than not this contact is also not beneficial either because of the language gap between the teacher and the student or because of the absenteeism of the teacher and the students for the whole year.

The society has been closed and isolated, and having continuously lost the game of power with the advanced communities, is withdrawn, and continuously seeks to consolidate its existing potential. Alienation of land, chronic indebtedness, labour with low remuneration alienated educated youth (which neither fits in with the society within nor with the advanced societies) have all become a way of life for them. The tribal's skills endowment is all together different from that of the outside world, and is sufficient only for him to eke an existence in poverty. His assimilative power is low because he has no access to outside experience and has not himself gone through the processes of beneficial change. Change for the tribal community has invariably led to destruction of his property or alienation of the same or a further retreat into yet more inaccessible areas. His natural resources in most places have been depicted or exploited by the advanced communities. In areas where the opening up has not yet taken place, the tribal continues at the level of isolation, and a skill endowment which is sufficient to permit him to eke a living from the land and the forest. This situation is true of almost all areas, of tribal concentration in the country.

Hence the literacy levels are extremely low, and due to the lack of healthy contact with the outside world, the assimilative powers which are necessary for generating processes of change are rather low. This leads to perpetual state of poverty and isolation of the tribal communities.

2. THE TRIBAL COMMUNITY CONTEXT IN INDIA:

The total number of tribal communities recognized by the government as Scheduled Tribes is 572 in number. Scheduled Tribes are those tribal communities who have been listed so by the President of India in keeping with Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution. These tribal communities mainly live in Scheduled Areas, or those outlying areas, which during the British times did not come under the direct purview of civil, criminal and revenue administration.

Regional Concentration of Tribal Communities in India

North-Eastern region: In the mountain valleys and other areas of north-eastern India, covering the States and Union Territories like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura live tribes like the Abor, Garo, Khasi, Kuki, Mismi, Naga, etc., who mostly belong to Mongolian racial stock.

Himalayan region: In the sub-Himalayan regions covering parts of North-Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh live tribes like Lepcha, Rabha, etc., mostly belonging to Mongolian racial group.

Central India region: In the older hills and Chotanagpur Plateau, along the dividing lines between peninsular India and the Indo-Gangetic basin, live many tribal communities like the Bhumij, Gond, Ho, Oraon, Munda, Santal, etc., covering the States of Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal and mostly belonging to Proto-Australoid racial stock.

Western India region: Covering the States like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli live a number of tribal communities the most important of them being the Bhil racially belonging to the Proto-Australoid group.

Southern India region: Covering the States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, in the Nilgiri Hills and converging lines of the Ghats live the Chenchu, Irula, Kadar, Kota, Kurumba, Toda, etc., having Negrito, Caucasoid, Proto-Australoid or mixed physical features.

Island region: Covering Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands live a number of small tribes like the Andamanese, Onge, Sentinelese, etc.

Source: Chaudhuri, Bhddhadeb (Ed). (1992), Tribal Transformation in India Vol. I, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications

Traditional tribal communities are mainly characterized by:

- Relative geographical isolation and thus experiencing political, economic and social discrimination. The mainstream ruling elite treats the homeland of the tribal communities in India as their internal colony.
- Dependence for their survival mainly on natural resources and being spiritually linked to their lands.
- A distinct culture, which is community oriented and valuing the power of nature. They believe no one should take advantage of another's weakness.
- No centralized political institutions and are organized at the level of the community making decisions on a consensus basis.
- A differing worldview, consisting of a custodial and non-materialistic attitude to land and natural resources.

However, traditional tribal societies are undergoing a rapid change with the mainstreaming policy of the Indian government. For the tribal communities the process of becoming a part of the mainstream has meant a declining control on their resources and erosion of their cultural heritage.

3. SCENARIO OF TRIBAL EDUCATION IN CHATTISGARH:

In today's context, education is synonymous with formal education, which involves teaching conducted in a school, based on a State-guided curriculum, imparted by teachers formally employed and trained for the job. The Jan Rapats broaden this definition to include not only school education, but all learning, knowledge and information that people acquire over the course of their life. Knowledge encompasses wisdom (gyaan), information (jaankaari), and education (vidya or shiksha). In analysing knowledge, therefore, it is important to explore the local systems of knowledge and education. While knowledge can be explored in all aspects of life, including knowledge systems with respect to livelihoods, health, social, political and economic institutions, customs and traditions, education is important in enhancing human development. Formal education builds capabilities that enable people to avail of opportunities both at home and outside. It is a process that develops self-reliance and self-esteem, so that a person can negotiate the world with skill and understanding. This chapter explores the various dimensions of the process of education in Chhattisgarh. The first section examines what people mean by education, learning and information. Secondary data related to the status of education and literacy is presented in the next section. This is Education, knowledge and Information followed by a discussion of knowledge domains and transmission processes, as they exist in Chhattisgarh. The perception of the people from the Jan Rapats and that of the stakeholders – the parents, the

children and the teachers – as well as issues relating to alienation and integration that arise in the context of Chhattisgarh are covered in a separate section. Issues in school education including access, infrastructure requirements, teachers and curriculum precede an analysis of the role of the community. The last section presents suggestions for intervention and conclusions.

3.1 Education, Learning and Information

The Jan Rapats provide an opportunity for people to identify, define and articulate their understanding of traditional and modern education. The Village Reports list the various types of knowledge and the different methods of imbibing this knowledge. They emphasise that education is closely linked with the way a society lives and works and is often imparted in an informal manner by the family and social institutions. The scope and definition of education is therefore not limited to formal schooling alone, except when referring to provisioning, the quality of teaching or teachers. Education, then, refers to a continuous process that enlightens, strengthens and empowers people. Transmission of education may be in the form of letters, a skill, a way to live life, the capability to extract natural resources from the forests, to make medicine from herbs, to cultivate land, or learning to read and write. People clearly articulate the sentiment that while there may have been an absence of a formal structure like a 'school' in the past, a number of sources of learning did exist that continue to be present today.

The Jan Rapats stress that education needs to be viewed more broadly, so as to include thinking processes, intellectual and analytical enhancement as well as the development of skills. The Reports show that people appreciate the need for children to go to school and the importance of literacy. The role of schools is seen as important, but limited. Schools provide the skills of reading and writing from prescribed textbooks, which may not always be relevant in a particular society.

3.2 Literacy and Education

It is important to examine the status of education as gleaned from secondary sources of information, so as to understand the background in which the Jan Rapats have been written. The analysis of the status of education in Chhattisgarh is limited by the availability of data. The data on education is entirely school based and evaluates parameters relating to skills such as literacy and students' attainments in school education. Here the status of education is evaluated within this framework alone.

Due to the difficult terrain and the social and economic profile of its people, Chhattisgarh has had low literacy levels and limited access to school education. There are regional differences in the level of and access to education.

3.3 Progress in literacy

The last decade has been a period of marked improvement in the literacy rate in Chhattisgarh. From a literacy rate of 42.91 percent in 1991 as against the national average of 54.21 percent, the literacy rate in Chhattisgarh has climbed to 64.7 percent in 2001, and it is at par with the national average of 64.8 percent. Better enrolment, reduced dropout rates, better access to schools for children and some success in adult literacy programmes have enabled the State of Chhattisgarh to catch up with the national average in just a decade.

Table 1. Literacy rate in Chhattisgarh and India 1991 and 2001 (%)

	Chhattisgarh-1991	India - 1991	Chhattisgarh - 2001	India - 2001
Persons	42.91	54.21	64.70	64.8
Male Literacy	58.07	64.13	77.40	75.3
Female Literacy	27.52	39.29	51.90	53.7
Rural	36.72	44.69	60.48	58.7
Urban	71.37	73.08	80.58	79.9

Source: Census of India, 2001

3.4 Growth of literacy – inter district comparisons

A comparison of the literacy rate in the last decade shows that Kanker, Rajnandgaon, Surguja, Raigarh, Jashpur and Kabirdham have recorded substantial increases in literacy levels with an increase of at least 25 percentage points. Districts like Rajnandgaon, Mahasamund, Raigarh and Durg, which have relatively high literacy rates, started with better initial situations and continue to have higher literacy rates. This supports the view voiced in many Jan Rapats that an area or people that has had access to education earlier continues to have an advantage over areas that are late starters.

Kanker seems to be the only exception. The three districts of Kanker, Bastar and Dantewada (all three were part of district Bastar, prior to 1998) were part of the first phase of the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). While Kanker in 2001 has recorded a literacy rate higher than the State average of 64.7 percent, both Dantewada and Bastar have significantly lower literacy rates at 30.2 percent and 43.9 percent respectively. However, each of these

districts recorded a doubling in their literacy rates in the 1991-2001 period. Kanker district has recorded the highest percentage increase. The literacy rate for women has improved significantly in the last ten years, moving up from 27.52 percent to 51.9 percent. Kanker, Rajnandgaon, Durg, Dhamtari, Raigarh, Raipur, Jashpur and Mahasamund districts have female literacy rates, which are higher than the national average. However, in Dantewada district, only one in five women is literate and in Bastar district only one in three women is literate.

3.5 Access to primary education

The provision of universal access to primary education has enabled much of this success. The total number of pre-primary and primary schools in the State was 31,086 in 2002-03, with an enrolment of 30,19,092 children. Girls constitute about 47 percent of the total enrolment in schools. The number of teachers in these schools is 73,871 and the average teacher pupil ratio is 1:45. This average figure does not reflect the extremely high teacher-pupil ratios in some districts. The Jan Rapats state that in many villages, one teacher looks after 50 to 70 students and may even teach multiple classes simultaneously. In addition, 2,55,303 children are enrolled in the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) schools which have been set up.

3.6 Improvement in enrolment

The enrolment at the entry level (class I) has improved with respect to the girl child. The total enrolment in 2001-02 was 7,23,180 children, of which 3,23,500 or 44.7 percent were girls. In 2002-03 enrolment increased to 8,20,234 of which 3,85,315 or 47 percent were girls. The increase in the enrolment of girls is higher than the enrolment for boys. The increasing awareness of the need to educate girls is reflected in the Jan Rapats.

3.7 People's Perceptions regarding Education, Knowledge and Information

The Village Jan Rapats compare the status of education in the past with the current situation. Comparisons are based on provisioning, status, condition and access to schools. In the case of knowledge and information, comparisons are made in terms of the relevance of education in the past.

3.8 Changing relevance of knowledge and information

There are different perceptions about knowledge and information. In the past, knowledge and information was much more closely linked to the natural environment, to the immediate social environment and to the needs of local economy. Today, information and knowledge constitute aspects related to the 'country' and 'the world' and to different streams of technological information.

3.9 The popular context of education

In the past, the realm of each individual's knowledge was related to his or her local environment. Due to poor roads and transportation networks, under-developed telecommunications and the virtual absence of media, new ideas and knowledge could not reach the villages. Today, the knowledge domain of an individual in the village has widened beyond the scope of the village to the national and even the international level. With the improvement in infrastructure, attitudes have changed and many more children have started going to school. With the coming of radio, television and computers, there is strong demand for education today.

3.10 School education

The beginning of school education is not very clearly reflected in the Jan Rapats, but most reports trace it back to five or six decades. They mention that the introduction of school education has led to significant changes in the villages. Most villages feel that in the last few years, the spread of school education has increased and basic pedagogy and access have changed, providing greater equity and ease of access. The Reports mention that, earlier education was restricted to the rich, the ruling and the priestly classes, while today education is available to all classes and provides an opportunity for people to develop themselves. The need to prioritise access to education for those groups and people who were denied access to education in the past has been reinforced in all the District Reports. For instance, the Bilaspur District Report clearly states that the underprivileged sections of society continue to be educationally disadvantaged even today. The Raigarh District Report also specifically mentions that the villages where educational institutions were set up quite early continue to have high levels of literacy. However, forest villages, villages with high migration, remote villages, and villages with predominantly disadvantaged communities continue to have low levels of literacy.

Many of the Jan Rapats refer, in particular, to the provisioning and quality of teaching at the district level. Schooling, access to schools, poor infrastructure, quality of teaching and shortcomings in the curriculum are some of the issues that are discussed in the reports. In the light of the fundamental right to education, the Jan Rapats clearly demand the right to be educated, for various reasons including growth in employment and social status. There is adequate knowledge and awareness of the State's role in the provisioning of education for the people. The usefulness

of the modern education system and the values it promotes is another issue that is discussed extensively during the Jan Rapat exercises.

Most reports feel that school education has alienated the youth from agriculture and created an aversion for land-based work. While about 57.7 percent of the Village Reports state that modern education is useful or moderately useful in daily life, a significant percentage (45 percent) of the Village Reports state that modern education is not useful in daily life. Yet, people want their children to be educated because they feel that education will assist them in the future. Only 29 percent of the Reports expect education to lead to employment.

Modern education in daily life

(percentage of Village Reports selected for perception analysis¹)

Region	Useful	Moderately useful	Not useful
Northern region	25	32	43
Central plains	17	41	41.9
Southern region	19	40	50.1
State	20	37.7	45

Source: Village Jan Rapats.

The demand for service-based occupations has increased. There is considerable disquiet amongst many villagers over this aspect. An important suggestion that emerges from the discussions is that the school curriculum should include aspects related to agriculture and land based activities. This will have two advantages, giving agriculture the same status as the other subjects of the curriculum and giving children learning that they can use in their everyday lives. School based education is unable to strengthen School based education is unable to strengthen and promote an appreciation of the local culture, livelihoods and customs and many individuals find themselves alienated from their own culture.

3.11 Differences in perception

An analysis of the Jan Rapats shows that people's perception of education (including knowledge and awareness) differs according to the income group that they belong to. The extract from the Akhara Jan Rapat illustrates this point succinctly. According to the Akhara report, traditional medicine is considered useful among the economically less well off groups while the richer sections are of the opinion that only illiterate people believe in these knowledge systems. The middle class believes that this knowledge is a desirable feature but for the poor this knowledge base is crucial as it helps them to find solutions to problems within their environment and makes them self sufficient in treating minor illnesses.

Thus, knowledge systems help to cope with the requirements of everyday life. It can be seen that what constitutes knowledge and utility is very much a function of the social, economic and geographic realities within which people live.

Different knowledge and skill systems are claimed by different groups of people, differentiated by economic criteria. While the better off sections speak of technical knowledge, the not so well to do sections talk of skill based and traditional knowledge. Interestingly, these distinctions are more apparent among men. Women, especially among the economically weaker sections, feel traditional knowledge is very useful for everyday life. The Jan Rapats do not contain any specific discussions of issues related to education of girls or of any special emphasis on educating the girl child. There is however some discussion on the education of children. Women from the less well off sections in the village speak of education as being necessary to keep pace with the world outside, where everyone is getting educated, reflecting the fear of further marginalisation. Across Village Reports, it is seen that education is considered to be a tool that empowers and the access to education is regarded as a means that can transform the social and economic status of people.

4. PERCEPTIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS REGARDING EDUCATION:

While recognising that parents, children and teachers play different roles with regard to education, the Jan Rapats recognise that education is a collective responsibility of all concerned.

4.1 Parents

The role of parents is to ensure that the child's basic requirements of food, clothing and shelter are provided for. They must also create conditions that enable their children to attend school regularly. For most parents, it is important to send children to school so that they can read, write and do arithmetic, which helps to maintain accounts. For daughters too, education is considered important, since parents feel that it is important to prepare them well before

they go to their in-laws. Education is often seen as an added qualification for marriage for the girl child and for imparting certain useful skills. Parents who cannot read or write reiterate that their parents were their gurus or teachers and that it is from them that they learnt about life. Besides the learning that children acquire in school, they are taught farming, how to feed the animals and social customs and traditions by their parents and grandparents.

4.2 Children

Children, both boys and girls, have to sometimes fight with their parents, for their right to education especially when money is scarce or when there is a need for extra hands at work. Often parents do not give any priority to education and children drop out of school. Children who receive full parental support in their education are far more motivated than those who do not.

For some children, going to school itself means breaking barriers. There are no specific reasons offered by the children as to why they want to study. Some do say that they would like to pursue a degree and go out of the village to work. For others it is important to study but they do not necessarily have a stated ambition. For some children, the fear of failure keeps them away from school. In fact this is one of the main reasons for children dropping out of school. Discussions with girls in high school reveal that access to education for them is determined only in part by their gender. The economic class, caste and background also has a strong bearing on girls education. The economic status of the community determines the perception of the need for education of girls and the challenges they face. However some girls do manage to forge ahead and chalk out new paths for themselves. Schooling helps girls become independent and gives them some freedom of movement, albeit in a limited area. Girls say that they like coming to school because of the exposure they get to the outside world and school gives them a chance to move out of the village. Girl children are usually oriented and trained from a very young age to prepare themselves for marriage and household activities. Even though they do go to school, few think of careers in the future. Many girls are married at an early age and move to another home. Sometimes girls are withdrawn from school while they are in Class IV or V and married off. Early marriage is one of the main reasons for the high dropout rates among girls. This is more prevalent among families with first generation literates, where greater priority is given to housework and agricultural work than to education.

4.3 Teachers

Teachers feel that the teaching community was more respected in the past than it is today. Teachers had the liberty go to homes in the village and bring children to school. Today, very little importance is given to the teacher. There is a need for mobilising support for education in the community so that more parents send their children to school and understand its importance. According to the teachers, most parents send their children to school to learn simple arithmetic, so as to help them with their accounts.

The main reason cited by the teachers for children not coming to school is financial constraints. The teachers say that many parents are preoccupied with livelihood concerns. They do not force their children to attend school and the slightest inconvenience caused to regular life by sending children to school makes them withdraw their children from school. Children often miss school because they need to help their parents in the fields or to take care of the animals. Irregular attendance is a major problem, especially during the peak agricultural season. Typically, the children lag behind in class and are unable to cope with studies. They soon lose the motivation to carry on with their studies. The teachers need better facilities and opportunities for training and learning new methods of teaching. Usually only a few teachers get a chance to attend training sessions and they in turn share their learning with the rest of the group. Teacher trainings are generally held twice a year but few teachers get an opportunity to attend these programmes.

4.4 Education: Alienation and the need for integration

The Jan Rapats highlight how traditional knowledge is useful in conducting activities related to the lives and livelihoods of people, even in the present context. The current education system appears to have devalued other knowledge systems and created an imbalance in the existing structure. There is some reflection on modern school based education and the need for its integration into people's lives, indicating its alienation from everyday life. This is in contrast to the earlier knowledge and education in the community, which was contextual. Education in the past included all activities and knowledge domains necessary for daily life, including culture, religion and practices. The teachers were community elders, parents and family members - the knowledge holders of society. Education mainly comprised occupational knowledge, traditional customs. The increase in the geographical locations with which trade and commerce is carried out, the increased mobility of labour, better transport facilities are factors responsible for several changes that have happened in some of the villages of Chhattisgarh. The slow growth of agriculture has meant that there is a need for technical education and technical knowledge, which is not available within the local society.

4.5 Issues in enrolment

Education is perceived as being directly linked with development. It is regarded as a means to better opportunities in the future and it is this belief that encourages parents to send their children to school. While there has been a growth in the enrolment of children in school, especially that of girls, there is also a high drop out rate. High enrolment does not necessarily translate into regular attendance. The retention rate in the higher classes is low. Inadequate facilities is one of the main factors that hinder the enrolment of children. While efforts to increase the number of schools and locate a school in every habitation as well as to provide adequate school infrastructure have been underway for many years now, infrastructure is still inadequate. The lack of resources, buildings, rooms and teachers has also adversely affected the quality of education imparted.

4.6 Girls' enrolment

The gender role for girls as defined by traditional society often persuades parents to assume that the education of girls is an unnecessary investment. Girls are usually made to stay home to look after the household needs of the family, which they continue to do after they grow up and get married. There are no specific issues that have been highlighted in the Reports with respect to the education of girls, although it has been mentioned that even if girls are officially enrolled in school, they do not attend school. Field visits and discussions with middle school girls reveal the challenges faced by them when they go to school. Financial constraint is a major factor that prevents girls from attending school. Though all children face the threat of not being sent to school when their parents are not economically well off, girls find it even more difficult because of their prescribed gender role. Besides social issues, another reason for poor attendance of girls in school is the concern for safety. Some Reports articulate the need for ashram shalas (hostels) for girls, if the school is situated outside the village. Girls who live in remote areas, specifically villages where no school exists, face more problems because of the distance they have to travel. However, the attitude with regard to education of girls is changing. In Raigarh, for example more and more girls are enrolled in schools and the reasons for this are agricultural prosperity, better availability of educational institutions as well as a general improvement in transport infrastructure, due to increased investment in roads. The Soochna Shakti Yojana, which offers computer literacy for girls, has been mentioned in some District Reports.

4.7 Out-of-school children

In most of Chhattisgarh, children are regarded as an important economic asset for families. While education is perceived as having the potential to enhance livelihoods it is also seen as a threat that keeps hands away from work and makes children unwilling to work in traditional occupations. The Jan Rapats also mention that parents find it difficult to retain children in school, because school hours often coincide with working hours. Since school education does not appear to provide any major benefit in everyday life, children are often withdrawn to support their families. The children themselves are vulnerable to dropping out, and the education system is not sensitive to the psychological requirements of these children, or even to their learning needs. The challenge lies in helping these children to continue with their education and to make education relevant to their lives. Field visits and discussions with school going children reveal that the fear of failure is another reason for dropping out. Villages with high migration tend to have high drop out rates. Families that move in search of alternate livelihood during the 'off' season work on a contract basis and there are no fixed places of migration.

4.8 Problems in receiving education:

Following are the problems which creates hindrances in receiving education in tribal areas

4.8.1 Issues of access

Access to education remains an issue in many districts despite the recent initiatives in literacy and universalisation of education. Remotely located or sparsely populated villages face challenges regarding the continuity of education, even if they have sufficient access to primary education. Some of the smaller and remoter villages have been serviced with schools under the formal Government school system and it is important that the achievement of such schools in ensuring universal reach of primary education is extended to universal elementary education.

4.8.2 Infrastructure and curriculum

One of the main challenges in provisioning infrastructure is to keep pace with the growing pupil population. The facilities in many primary schools are not up to the mark and the available infrastructure is under stress. New buildings are required and the existing buildings have to be up graded and expanded.

4.8.3 Teachers

Though the overall teacher pupil ratio in most districts conforms to the norm of 1:40, the situation in many schools within the districts is very different. Many schools have 50 to 100 children with just one teacher. Such

situations make it impossible to provide quality education. Other problems such as teacher absenteeism, low competence of teachers, teachers who do not reside in the village and improper appointment of teachers

4.8.4 Curriculum

Need to introduce relevant subjects and use local specific examples:

In the debate between traditional knowledge systems and modern education system, there is now an emerging consensus on the need for the two systems to complement each other. The demand for introduction of agriculture based education in the middle school helps to provide a local context to the syllabus being taught in schools. subjects like animal husbandry, agriculture, and poultry farming techniques should be included in the curriculum. Subjects that are relevant for the children should be introduced and the traditional knowledge base should be incorporated into the current curriculum. Teaching should be practical based and less pedantic.

Need to ensure rural-urban parity in education:

Education has created stratification in society between physical labour and white-collar jobs. Livelihoods such as agriculture and animal husbandry are not given due respect. Educated youth look for Government jobs after completing school education. They do not respect their traditional occupations, and do not want to go back to doing physical work and prefer being part of the 'educated unemployed'. Computer facilities and training to be provided in schools so that the children from the villages are at par with the urban children. The demand for computer education is more vocal in large and well-connected villages. There is also a demand for the inclusion of English language in the curriculum.

Long term initiatives in school education

Although there is a primary school in most villages, it is important to ensure that children do not stop at the primary level but complete their school education. There is thus a strong demand for secondary and high schools from all villages. Secondary schools and high schools can change the perception of parents and children towards education as they see their wards gaining knowledge and skills that re-emphasise the benefits of schooling.

4.9 Role of the Community

There are varying ideas on the role of community in education. People in some villages are ready to assist in improving education and schools while in other villages people feel that the Panchayat Samitis, the elected representatives in the village and the Government should ensure education for all. They feel that the community can only be partially responsible for activities like maintenance of schools and that the elected. Representatives and the Government should play a more active role. In some villages, the community has offered community support and voluntary labour for new educational initiatives. Some Jan Rapats suggest that the community should have the authority to plan and implement educational initiatives. The areas where the community can play a supportive role as recommended:

Community mobilisation

Raising awareness about the benefits of education and mobilising people to send their children to school are areas where the community can play an important role. Motivating educated young people to teach in the rural schools is another service that the community can provide.

Voluntary services

The community is willing to provide voluntary labour for the maintenance and construction of school buildings.

Role of local Government bodies

The role of the Panchayat Samitis in monitoring the development and in ensuring proper provisioning of education, needs to be better defined. They should also be responsible for spreading awareness about education and for providing facilities for teachers to stay in the villages where the schools are located.

5. CONCLUSION:

Education must ensure the application of knowledge to everyday life and provide wider opportunities to people. The education is not linked with the lives of people in the villages, that it does not reflect their life style and is therefore alien to their home environment. This makes the absorption of education tedious for children and is viewed by parents as being irrelevant. Changing this requires considerable work in a range of areas including curriculum and pedagogy as well as the tools and techniques of teaching. Curriculum development is essential and the developments of textbooks using stories and references that are local and contextual to the area are needed. These may even be district or region specific. While the State has adopted the CBSE curriculum, efforts have to be directed towards

education that is relevant. At the primary level, education should be even more rooted in the local milieu. To ensure quality in education, the Government will need to build expertise in the State and this requires centres of learning staffed by sensitive and quality resource persons. Governmental and nongovernmental agencies must be mobilised to identify such people, both within the State and from outside, the resident systems of knowledge are not given the recognition they deserve and these systems are fast disappearing. This traditional knowledge needs to be incorporated into the curriculum will help children to use local knowledge together with modern systems. This process will also begin the process of codification and documentation of traditional systems of knowledge. The infrastructure needs of schools have to be met, including the upgrading of facilities and the proper maintenance of buildings. Forty one percent of the Village Reports suggest better educational facilities. In addition, the provision of facilities like drinking water, separate toilets for girls and boys, playgrounds and basic teaching equipment require attention, there is an urgent need to ensure that adequate number of teachers is present in every school so that they teach and attend school regularly and the required pupil teacher ratio is maintained. Gram Panchayats need to play a more decisive role and the Panchayats must focus on how they can galvanise popular demand for better infrastructure in schools by utilising community initiatives. The existing school level committees need to be strengthened and communities need to get more involved in the management and maintenance of schools. It is important to look at technical and vocational educational courses. Courses linked to livelihood needs, technical knowledge and information in agriculture as well as manufacturing are required. An overhaul of the vocational education system in the State is required. Many new skills have already been added to the vocational institutions. There is an urgent need to make existing and new skill based training technically up to date, to build up a trained work force. Increased participation by the community in managing schools will have a constructive effect on the teaching - learning process. In spite of legal and administrative provisions, the role of the community is limited. A community that is more pro-active will be able to ensure that future generations can benefit from the advancements that are being made today.

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