



Factors Affecting The Attitude Of Teachers Towards Quality Education For Tribal Girls

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ABSTRACT

Education is a fundamental human right, serving as a cornerstone for individual empowerment and societal progress. It is a powerful tool that has the potential to break the cycle of poverty and inequality, fostering a brighter future for all. However, access to quality education has not been uniform across different segments of society in general and those belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups in particular. Further, it is observed that the education of tribal girls is mostly neglected in the society. The present study seeks to explore the factors influencing the attitude of Ashram school teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. Normative Survey method is used for the present study. The sample of the study consists of 300 teachers (30 Headmasters, 150 School Assistants and 120 Secondary Grade Teachers) working in the Ashram schools located in the rural as well as semi-urban areas in Srikakulam district. The data were collected from the respondents through a questionnaire developed by the researchers. The study explores to study the influence of factors such as the commitment of teachers towards the profession, infrastructural and instructional facilities available in the school, working environment and service conditions on the education of tribal girls in Ashram schools. Further, the study also seeks to know the influence of certain demographic variable – gender, teaching experience and location of the school on the attitude of teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls. The findings of the study revealed that gender, teaching experience and location of the school have no influence on the attitude of teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls. However, the commitment of teachers towards the profession along with the working environment has shown a significant positive influence on the attitude of teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.

Key Words: Attitude, Quality concerns, Tribal girls, Ashram schools, Survey method.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the most important instrument for human resource development. One cannot imagine formal education without schools, which play a major role in molding the basic ideas, habits and

attitudes of the young children. Schools provide not only education to the children but also keep them away from the social evils. It is the key that opens the doors of life. It plays a pivotal role in social change. Education is widely accepted as the essential tool for the attainment of the developmental goals and leads to political consciousness, awareness of rights and duties among the people of a nation.

Education is a fundamental human right, serving as a cornerstone for individual empowerment and building a civilized society. It is a powerful tool that has the potential to break the cycle of poverty and inequality, fostering a brighter future for all. However, access to quality education has not been uniform across different segments of society in general and those belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups in particular. Further, it is observed that the education of tribal girls is mostly neglected in the society.

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL GIRLS

A 'tribe' may be seen as a sub group of the society. The members of a tribe live in a common territory and have a common dialect, which is the prime means of communication. Each tribe has a uniform social organization and possesses cultural homogeneity. The tribal population is characterized by a heterogeneous cultural pattern with variegated economic conditions and activities depending largely on ecology. There are also wide variations in psychological, cultural, social, economic and political background of various tribal groups. In a country like India, there are large numbers of tribal people, who because of historical and sociological reasons, have strayed away from the main stream of the society.

Tribal communities have historically occupied more remote and inaccessible parts of the country which continues to remain a crucial challenge for ensuring inclusive development for these groups today. While distinct from one another, a key factor that differentiates STs from mainstream society is their distinct ways of life, which include differences in socio-cultural and political organization, though these are undergoing rapid changes as a result of modernization and development (**Nambissan 2000**). This has also put them at a significant disadvantage as these changes have resulted in further cultural and economic marginalization of STs, particularly through the deprivation of their traditional rights over forests and other resources (**Jha and Jhingran 2005; Veerbhadranaika et al. 2012**).

The educational outcomes of tribal children are affected by social and location factors, in addition to school-related variables (**Sujatha, 2004**). Access to basic education still remains a challenge for a large segment of this population across the country, especially in economically or/and educationally backward areas (**NCERT, 2006**). The dropout rates for tribal children between classes I-V have been particularly high in India (65 per cent, with the dropout rate for tribal girls being as high as 82 per cent). The sharpest drop in enrolment is seen to be between classes I and II (**NCERT 2006**). The retention has been a crucial challenge when it comes to tribal education, compounded by problems of high absenteeism and large-scale failure in year- end assessments.

Nevertheless, a number of studies have shown that tribal children have lower achievement levels as compared to non-tribal children **(Sujatha, 2004)**.

THE CONCEPT OF 'QUALITY EDUCATION'

'Quality education' can be understood as the process of building and operating the learning environment in the schools to stimulate learning of all children to their potential. The input indicators of the quality education are the access including school buildings, supplies, teachers, curriculum and teaching. The output indicators include learning and achievement of pupils in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude.

Generally the phrase, 'quality education' implies standard and efficiency in the system of education. It includes availability of teachers, quality of instruction, syllabi and curricula, test issues, examination system etc. Improving the quality of education is the key and vital issue in tribal education system.

QUALITY EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL GIRLS

The quality of tribal education is a multifaceted issue and is dependent on the initiation of the Government, the teachers and the parents. Tribal leaders felt the need for special intervention focusing universal enrolment, universal achievement and universal retention. The task in providing quality education at the elementary level mainly involves improvement in the preparation, motivation and development of the students and the teachers, language issue, the quality of textbooks, infrastructural facilities etc. Tribal experts feel intervention programmes like upgrading curriculum, conducting training programmes, securing new teaching aids, hiring teachers with tribal background, usage of ICT and other motivational schemes etc., are also considered very important. It is the need of the hour for providing the minimum standard of quality in respect of tribal education **(Rita Rani Talukdar, 2013)**. All these issues would be useful in the improvement of enrolment, reduction of dropouts and addressing the gender gap, which will be useful, in turn, in providing quality in the educational system in the long run. Though the Governments of Maharashtra and Telangana have implemented some of the above schemes for quality education, the progress seems to be not very satisfactory as per the various NCERT and other research reports. It seems the quality in tribal education has some more missing links and needs different approaches **(AjantaBrahma,2007)**. Moreover there are some issues which affect adversely in providing quality education for tribal students. These issues include paucity of funds for tribal education, less expenditure on staff salaries, non-availability of full-time teachers, purchasing irrelevant teaching aids, internal corruption, bad school infrastructure, lack of scholarships and incentives, non-availability of textbooks and uniforms on time etc., can be seen in many reports which influence negatively in providing quality education for tribal children. High out-of-pocket expenditure on education by the parents is also one of the serious and key reasons for non-enrolment and high drop-outs in the case of ST students **(Karnataka state budget, 2005,2010 and 2015;Maharashtra state budget, 2009 and 2001)**.

Quality education may simply imply the attainment of specific targets and objectives. An interpretation of 'quality' may be based on an institution's or a programme's reputation, the extent to which schooling has influenced change in students' knowledge, attitudes, values and behavior or a complete theory or ideology of acquisition and application of learning.

Spread of quality education among marginalized sections like tribes of the society has become a formidable task in India today. Quality education for tribal children needs to be considered on priority basis not only because of the constitutional obligation, but also for the comprehensive development of the tribal communities in the country. However, under the influence of globalization, tribal education and culture have been tremendously influenced. The uniqueness of the tribal culture, which enriches the country's culture, is fast disappearing and even getting indistinct under very powerful influences of the dominant urban culture. According to **Rita Rani Talukdar (2013)**, "Different types of programmes like compensatory, remedial, enrichment, guidance, teacher-orientation, parental education, curriculum renewal etc., are to be conducted regularly in the schools in tribal areas with a view to provide quality education for tribal children. These programmes will help in increasing the educational attainment and personality development of the tribal students". Under these circumstances, there is a dire need to take necessary steps to improve 'quality' in tribal education and bring the tribal population into the mainstream of the society.

Access to quality education for tribal girls is a topic of paramount importance, as it intersects with various facets of development, such as gender equality, poverty alleviation, and social justice (**Power & Power, 2015**). Indigenous and tribal communities have long experienced systemic discrimination, socio-economic exclusion, and geographical isolation, which has severely limited their access to education (**Chakraborty, 2013**). Among these marginalized groups, tribal girls often face the double burden of gender and ethnic-based discrimination, making their educational journey even more challenging. Historically, the educational experiences of tribal girls have been marred by a lack of infrastructure, inadequate resources, and culturally insensitive curricula (**Power & Power, 2015**). These factors have contributed to high dropout rates and limited educational attainment among tribal girls. In the absence of quality education, tribal girls are denied the opportunity to develop essential skills, knowledge, and self-confidence, hindering their personal growth and prospects for a better future (**Arya & Chauhan, 2012**).

FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL GIRLS

There are various factors that influence the quality of education for tribal girls. Teachers' commitment towards the profession, Infrastructural and instructional facilities, Working environment and Service conditions in the schools play a significant role in providing quality education for tribal girls.

The following are some of the factors that influence the quality of education for tribal girls:

- 1. Economic Hardships:** The financial struggles faced by parents impact the perceived value and relevance of education for tribal girls.
- 2. Marriage Practices:** Early marriages among tribal women remain a hindrance for their education, affecting their ability to complete formal schooling.
- 3. Lack of role models:** The absence of role models within the village can impact girls' motivation to pursue education.
- 4. Teacher competence:** Having competent teachers who understand local contexts and use the local language can facilitate successful education outcomes.
- 5. Need-based curriculum:** The syllabus content should be based on the needs of the tribal girls and reflect their culture. It should have relevance to local conditions with a view to provide better educational experiences.
- 6. Stable family income:** A stable income within the family can positively influence girls' educational opportunities.
- 7. Parental support:** The encouragement and support from the parents towards the education of their daughters would certainly help girls to pursue their education.

ROLE OF ASHRAM SCHOOLS IN PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION FOR TRIBAL GIRLS

Ashram schools are residential schools in which free boarding and accommodation along with other facilities and incentives are provided to the students. In ashram schools, apart from formal education, there is emphasis put upon physical activities, meditation, sight-seeing, play, sports, games; and other extra-curricular activities such as drawing, painting, handicrafts, music and dance. Ashram schools have been regarded as operative institutions to meet the educational needs of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, other backward classes and individuals belonging to poverty stricken families. The concept of Ashram Schools stemmed from the objective of providing an atmosphere in which the inmates are offered full opportunities to develop their personality and outlook marked with a high sense of responsibility towards their own community. In addition to formal schooling, these institutions create decision making ability among the inmates. The teachers in tribal areas, particularly those working in Ashram Schools, must have a thorough knowledge of tribal life and culture. They should be able to understand the tribal language. Then only they will be in a position to render their services for the well-being of the tribal community.

The following are some of the functions of Ashram Schools:

- (i) To impart general formal education;
- (ii) To facilitate the enrolment of students belonging to SC and ST communities, who are not able to find means to continue their education without assistance from the government;
- (iii) To reduce the drop-out rate and to improve the retention capacity of the school;

- (iv) To impart socially useful crafts along with general education;
- (v) To make a provision for facilities to improve the standard of living of tribal children.
These facilities include counseling and guidance services, proper teaching-learning methods, instructional strategies and other sources that are necessary to make them lead an efficient life.
- (vi) To enable the individuals sharpen their skills and abilities.
- (vii) To make them aware of their inner strengths and capabilities; and develop in them courage and self-confidence.
- (viii) To lay emphasis in providing vocational education, dance, music, fine-arts, handicrafts, physical activities and sports for tribal children.
- (ix) To provide good accommodation and healthy food to the students living in the attached hostels of Ashram schools.
- (x) To provide close interaction between the teacher and the taught through increased individual attention.

Ashram schools provide an environment conducive to learning and address issues related to access to quality education. Additionally, scholarships and financial incentives are to be introduced to encourage tribal girls to continue their education (Ghosh, 2007). Teachers who are committed and dedicated for the noble cause of teaching, particularly those interested in the education of tribal girls, should be appointed in the model schools meant for tribal girls. Engaging tribal communities in the education of their girls is crucial. Community-based organizations may take lead in creating awareness among tribal parents towards the education of their daughters. The schools should provide necessary infrastructural and instructional facilities; and create congenial learning environment for tribal girls to continue their studies without any hurdles.

NEED FOR THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

Researchers have studied the efficacy of various educational initiatives in the tribal regions of India and have identified reasons for low levels of education among the tribes (**Pradhan, 2011; Sahu, 2014**). Factors such as poverty, lack of awareness among parents and students, family issues, language barrier and socio-economic inequalities emerged as key obstacles in attaining higher educational credentials in tribal communities (**Punnaiah, 2018**). While the above-mentioned studies do explore the challenges for tribal communities in accessing higher education, it does not exclusively deal with the case of young tribal girls, particularly in rural setting, whose social and cultural context is different from that of a tribal student situated in an urban setting. Several studies tend to club both the boys and girls accounts together and do not provide a nuanced understanding of what role does gender play in shaping the educational attainment of a tribal girl. Moreover, existing studies are biased towards studying the barriers in attaining education, without paying a similar attention on identifying the potential enablers. In order to address the research gaps, the present study takes the case of tribal girls studying in the Ashram schools located in rural as well as semi-urban areas in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. The present study is intended to explore

the attitude of Ashram school teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present study is to find out the attitude of Ashram school teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls..

The study also aims at finding out the influence of certain demographic variables - gender, age and designation on the attitude of teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the present investigation:

- (i) There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.
- (ii) There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers aged below 40 years and those aged 40 years and above towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.
- (iii) There is no significant difference in the attitude of Headmasters, School Assistants and Secondary Grade Teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is intended to know the influence of three demographic variables, viz., gender, teaching experience and location of the school on the attitude of teachers towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to find out the attitude of 300 teachers (30 Headmasters, 150 School Assistants and 120 Secondary Grade Teachers) working in 30 Ashram schools located in the rural as well as semi-urban areas in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh. These teachers include male and female; aged below 40 years and those aged 40 years and above working as Headmasters, School Assistants and Secondary Grade Teachers (SGTs) in the Ashram schools located in Srikakulam District.

METHODOLOGY

- (a) **Sample:** The sample of the study consists of 300 teachers (30 Headmasters, 150 School Assistants and 120 Secondary Grade Teachers) working in 30 Ashram schools located in the rural as well as semi-urban areas in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique.
- (b) **Research Tool:** The researchers used a well prepared questionnaire consisting of 48 items as the tool of research for the present investigation. These items have been divided into four categories relating to the four dimensions of teachers' perceptions towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls studying in Ashram schools, taking 12 items from each dimension.

These dimensions include: Teachers' Professional commitment, Infrastructural and instructional facilities, working environment and Service conditions. The tool was initially administered to 30 teachers (5 Headmasters, 15 School Assistants and 10 SGTs) under Pilot study. The measures of reliability, validity and objectivity of the tool have been established. Further, the researchers conducted item analysis for the items included in the tool. The final tool consisting of 40 items has been administered to 300 teachers (50 Headmasters, 150 School Assistants and 100 SGTs) working in the Ashram Schools in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh.

STATISTICAL INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The data collected has been analyzed using different statistical techniques such as Mean score values, Standard Deviations and t-ratios; and are presented in the following table.

Table showing t-values of different variables relating to the attitude of teachers working in Ashram schools towards Quality concerns in the education of tribal girls

S.No.	Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Result
1	Gender	Male	160	146.00	46.79	0.20*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
		Female	140	147.07	44.75		
2	Teaching Experience	Less than 10 years	210	147.16	46.94	0.16*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
		10 years & above	90	148.06	44.58		
3	Location of the school	Rural	230	147.63	47.45	0.24*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
		Semi-urban	70	149.07	42.17		

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, the researchers have arrived at the following findings and drawn the conclusions.

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers working in Ashram schools towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls..
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of Ashram school teachers with an experience of less than 10 years and those with 10 years and above towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in Ashram schools located in

rural and semi-urban areas towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that gender, teaching experience and location of the school have no influence on the attitude of teachers working in Ashram schools towards quality concerns in the education of tribal girls.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- (i) The present study throws light on the importance of education for tribal girls.
- (ii) The study helps tribal women realize the need for education to improve their status in the society.
- (iii) The study is an eye-opener to the policy makers to evolve policies with a view to improve quality in the education of tribal girls.
- (iv) The study helps to improve the working conditions in Ashram schools in order to provide quality education for the benefit of tribal girls.
- (iv) The study helps the parents realize the need for the education of their daughters for achieving women empowerment in the society.
- (v) The study helps the Academic Organizations like RIEs, SCERTs, NCERT, State Departments of Education to take necessary steps to conduct in-service training programmes for Ashram School teachers in order to develop in them necessary skills to provide quality education for tribal girls.

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