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RESEARCH ARTICLE

REORIENTING TRIBAL EDUCATION: ROLE OF IGNOU IN ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

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Abstract

Tribals are geographically, socially isolated and marginalized communities. Despite concerted efforts, the performance of tribes in education is much lower which is due to improper policies to link culture and education. Only by sincere and efficient methods of the government providing better facilities, concessions, collaboration with private organizations/NGOs, creating sanitary programmes, teaching learning materials and flexible skill oriented learning, attitudinal change in tribal education be achieved. Open and Distance learning has contributed a lot to the development of education among tribals. IGNOU Regional Centre Port Blair in Andaman Nicobar Islands has made a significant contribution in higher education by educating 576 tribes in various programmes over a period of ten years.

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Introduction:-

In the society, as education is a prime requisite for socio-economic development, its spread among the weaker section is significant. In our Constitution, as a Directive of State Policy it has been enshrined that the educational benefits of the weaker section of the society particularly the Scheduled castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) has to be promoted strategically. In the olden days of tribal people the system of education was well organized. The child learnt at home and at 'dormitories' and this training was related to various activities of tribal life. But with the emergence of Christian missionaries modern schools came up in tribal areas.

The main characteristic of a tribe is its uniformity; but this characteristic has got a setback due to the impact of modernity. A suggested stratification system is emerging within the tribal society on the basis of education, income, status and power. On the one hand a few privileged people are reaping all the benefits and on the other the vast bulk of tribals is wallowing in poverty and privation. Moreover these educated elites, instead of trying to improve the lot of the underprivileged brethren, are ruthlessly exploiting them. This has led to a situation where the majority of the tribals look upon these educated elects with disgust and distrust and this has evoked a negative attitude towards education. With modern education have come The modern values that have evolved as a result of modern education, has clashed with the age-old traditional values of tribal society; this has also led to the tribals being an opponent to modern education.

The tribes in India usually reside in hill areas, forests, near the seas, and in islands, their life style is quite different from non-tribals (Preet, 1994). It is not that their societies are static, but the pace of social change in tribal society is very slow. Moreover, as they are much economically backward, several efforts have been made by the Government

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to uplift and develop them. Nowadays, the governments of almost all nations are taking special care in upliftment and growth of the tribes (Nithya, 2014). It is also to be pointed out that a satisfactory level of development and growth has not been achieved even though our national leaders, elected representatives, law makers are committed for the development of the tribals (Chandra guru et.al, 2015).

Objectives:-

In this contest, the present paper makes a preliminary analysis on the following:

1. Factors affecting the education of tribals and effectiveness of different educational programmes
2. Contributions of Open and distance learning (ODL).
3. Education of tribals through IGNOU in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Factors affecting the Tribal Education:

The major retarding factors in tribal education are lack of social mobility and inter-cultural communications. As the teacher and the taught in the tribal areas belong to different cultures the communication barrier becomes almost insurmountable. It had been rightly said that even the best system of education is bound to fail without an efficient, resourceful and able teacher. Most of the teachers appointed in tribal areas are not interested because of various problems faced by them such as lack of proper residential facility, good salary, communication facility and social distancing from the tribal people. All these makes the teacher feels isolated, unhappy and discontented, which will invariably make the teacher a bad communicator of modern ideas and messages to tribal children. Even though the government has come up in recent times with various plans and programmes to improve the educational aspirations of the tribals, there are no good results to show as there is a lack of sincerity on the part of the officials charged with the implementation of these programmes which led to a credibility gap has between such officials and the tribal people. If all these problems are to be tackled successfully, the government should bring a change in the basic attitude in tribal education.

The government in its fervor to provide facilities to the tribal students and to bridge the gap has constructed hostels, supplied textbooks, provided different types of scholarship, etc. but instead it has widened the rift. The tribal students staying in separate hostels, availing themselves of separate scholarships, feel naturally ostracized. Children are also seen as economic assets to supplement the family income by working with parents and with others (Hasnain, 2004). It is also to be observed that for a tribal family, education is thought to be a means of luxury in a condition where there are other regular requirements for their existence in day to day life.

Contributions from the Open and Distance learning system:

Open and distance learning is an important component in the educational system which considers the fact that most of the teaching and learning process takes place without the involvement of face to face teaching. It is mostly performed by somebody who is not in contact with the learner, so that the whole process intends to incorporate larger proportions of open and flexible learning, in relation to access, imparting curriculum or the other essentials of open and distance education system. Open and distance learning systems comprises of an array of mechanisms such as: the aim, objectives and goals of an ODL system, curriculum and programmes, teaching and learning processes, self-learning material and other supportive resources, communication and interactive sessions, learner support and delivery processes, tutors/academic counselors, supportive staff and other specialists, evaluation and other ODL related resources. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) System for both school and higher education will act as an alternative to existing conventional education system so as to ensure complete access of all interested learners belonging to various groups especially poor, women, deprived, rural, marginalized citizens to education as well as for increasing the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER).

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) gained popularity due to flexibility of system, intensive use of technology and learner centric approach, mainly to the persons who were dropouts or unable to continue their formal education due to various reasons. Distance education is a flexible system that allows to enroll as a learner while performing a fulltime job (Bardley and Yates, 2000). The ODL system is flexible and learner friendly that permits all the individuals including persons residing in inaccessible and tribal regions to enroll as learners in different programmes, or otherwise it would not have been possible to them and they can complete the programme at their own pace, time and at their door steps without affecting their earning economies and culture.

In developing countries with tribal population, open and distance learning at the primary and secondary levels is an important method of expanding educational opportunities to the semi adult and adult population. Teacher education

program is an important area where the Open Distance learning has made a major contribution and in developing countries it is found that teacher training at a distance have reached large groups of students with profound impact on the development of national education system.

India has one of the largest ODL systems in the world in terms of number of institutions and enrolment (MHRD, 2019). The exponential growth in the education system has occurred with the establishment of Open Universities which were set up primarily to expand the outreach of higher education thereby widening the access to a large segment of the population particularly the disadvantaged. The ODL system as such is making significant contribution to the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of the country and accounts for 10.62 percent of the total enrolment in higher education (MHRD, 2019).

As of now, apart Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) there are 16 other Open Universities and around 110 Directorate of Distance Education Institutes under conventional system which offer education through open and distance learning. National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) offers many vocational and skill oriented programmes through distance mode and similarly IGNOU along with other Open Universities is also offering successfully many programmes of vocational and skill oriented in nature. Apart from this several related programmes on Tribal culture and development, Tribal development and Management, Tribal development etc are being offered through distance mode to study and research on the socio economic cultural aspects of the tribal and their empowerment in the country.

Tribal Education through IGNOU in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands:

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has established a regional centre in Port Blair during 2006 with eight learner support centres strategically located catering to educational needs of the Andaman Nicobar Islands. The learner support centres are in Port Blair (LSC -0201), Hut Bay (LSC-0203), Car Nicobar (LSC-0204), Nan Cowrie (LSC-0205), Campbell Bay (LSC-0206), Mayabunder (LSC 0208), ANIIMS (LSC-0212 P) and one learner support centre in the district jail, Prothrapur (LSC 0211D)

The tribals in Andaman and Nicobar Islands are using the educational services provided by IGNOU Regional Centre Port Blair through the open and distance learning mode and it is seen that they are enrolled in almost all programmes ranging from social sciences, sciences, economics, mathematics, commerce etc to equip and empower themselves in the changing world scenario.

The statistics of tribal enrollment in various IGNOU programmes in the Andaman Nicobar Islands for the last ten years is given in Table 1. From the table it is seen that from the year 2015, there is an increase in student enrolment compared to the previous years and also the increase in the enrolment has been almost steady throughout. The breakup of the student in terms of male and female as well as programme wise enrolment is given in Table 2. The numbers of female learners who take admissions in IGNOU are more when compared to the male learners among the scheduled tribes. The Bachelor of Arts programme of IGNOU is the degree programme which is taken as a course of study by most of the learners as depicted in Table 2. which is followed by the Bachelor of Science programme, Bachelor of Commerce, Masters in Hindi, English and Political Science.

Table 1:-

Year	Enrolment of Scheduled Tribes (Nos)
2009	41
2010	19
2011	37
2012	36
2013	30
2014	47
2015	68
2016	66
2017	69
2018	71
2019	71
2020	19

Table 2:-

ST STUDENTS FROM 2010 - 2020 (JAN 2020)			
PROGRAM	SEX		Grand Total
	MALE	FEMALE	
BA	115	170	285
BAEGH	0	3	3
BAG	16	18	34
BAHIH	1	0	1
BAPCH	0	1	1
BAPSH	3	0	3
BCA	1	2	3
BCOM	7	8	15
BLIS	6	27	33
BPP	2	2	4
BSC	16	23	39
BSCG	3	1	4
BSW	0	2	2
BTS	1	1	2
CDM	1	2	3
CRD	1	0	1
CTE	2	0	2
FCED	2	6	8
MAH	9	11	20
MCOM	3	5	8
MEC	4	7	11
MEG	7	15	22
MHD	1	5	6
MLIS	1	8	9
MP	2	0	2
MPA	10	4	14
MPS	10	12	22
MSO	3	7	10
MTTM	0	1	1
PGDCJ	1	0	1
PGDEMA	1	0	1
PGDRD	1	2	3
PGDT	0	3	3
Grand Total	229	346	576

Discussions:-

Instead of separate tribal hostels, there might be some percentage reservation of seats for tribals in a general hostel and tribal students should be encouraged to have active participation in various college as well as hostel activities, then only they could be brought into the mainstream.

It is a proven concept that, when a tribal child begins his education he starts with no linguistic information and conceptualisation whereas, a non-tribal child starts with a few familiar concepts and linguistic associations (Nanjunda, 2008). Therefore, preschool training programme for the tribal child is a prime requirement and the government should undertake such programmes if they really want to put the tribal students on an equal footing with the non-tribal.

As regards to the engagement of teachers, more and more appointments should be made from among the tribal population so that the teachers become 'accepted' very easily among the tribal students and this will help the teachers to deal with them by using a more permissive and motivational approach as they easily know their problems. The existing teachers should be provided with adequate facilities and they should be properly oriented so

as to educate the tribal students. The teachers should learn the tribal language and there can also be attempts at writing textbooks in tribal languages.

Moreover, in a tribal population or society, the education of children has little functional importance to them because, even after secondary education there can be no gainful employment and there are no incentives for education. Therefore, the existing curricula that is taught in their educational institutes should be related to socio-economic and cultural life of the tribals and emphasis must be on imparting skills and modern information on agriculture, poultry, forestry and carpentry, etc. It is only by providing better communication facilities, sanitary programmes, teaching materials and methods the government can hope to bring about an attitudinal change in the tribal population towards education (Sahu and Kabita Kumari 2014).

The Open Distance learning system plays an important role in the educational scenario as it can be applied for children and youth who were missing or being missed, or in schools for teaching at all levels of primary and secondary education in tribal areas. It is possible so because the ODL system follows a flexible approach wherein the students can learn at their own pace and time with losing their livelihood and socio economic status. The courses and programs are also aimed at the adult population to increase their socio economic status, cultural life, livelihoods and deprivation. Open and distance learning can be increasingly used to increase or substantiate Non-formal education and community development among tribals. Programs delivered through distance learning reach substantial numbers of women, in societies in tribal communities where women were deprived of conventional education. ODL system permit to advance themselves in teaching and skill development to face the complex problems of the today's world, as it requires much information from different disciplines.

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has been delivering several educational, skill oriented and livelihood programmes across the country through its Regional Centres for the benefit of the tribal population and thus in this study the educational output of IGNOU Regional Centre Port Blair in Andaman Nicobar Islands is evaluated in terms of the enrolment of Schedule Tribe students for a period from 2010-2020. Higher enrolment of learners among the tribal community as seen through Table 1 during the years 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019, which may be due to the fee waiver provided by IGNOU for the learners belonging to the SC/ST communities. Such concessions if given in future would be attracting more number of learners from the tribal community into the field of education, especially the higher education. The number of female students exceeds the male and this may be due to the fact that in the tribal population the men go to work and it's the female population that remain at home and this should be the reason why the female students tend to enroll for the IGNOU programmes. The enrolment of tribal students is more in the arts and commerce category which is rather a general trend and among the tribals it is also felt that the arts and commerce programmes are relatively more easy when compared with the science stream.

Conclusion:-

It is suggested that if successful candidates from the tribal community are trained as teachers or as trainees they could be the torch bearers for the whole community to get them into the mainstream of education and development thus reducing the barriers of language, difficulties, and culture. Different programs in areas like teacher development, social awareness, civic education, health education, human rights education, child rights education, environment education are to be developed and implemented through distance mode and a culture of the community college system can be implemented among the tribal community. Self help Groups (SHG) can be created among the woman folk in the tribal community, which would strengthen them economically and in turn lead them to educational empowerment. The educational concessions extended to the scheduled tribes by the Government of India if extended properly across all the educational institutions can lead to increased interests for education among the tribes. Indira Gandhi National Open University has been extending the educational concessions to all the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes students over several years and in Andaman Nicobar Islands the scheduled tribes are availing the same through IGNOU Regional Centre Port Blair and that should be one of the reasons for increased enrolment.

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