

Full Length Research Paper

Primary schooling in a tribal district of Maharashtra: Some policy relevance

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Accepted 3 August, 2009

The situation of primary schooling is indeed appalling in backward districts because education planning in India does not take into account the educational needs and aspirations of the poor people. The study focuses the situation of primary education in some tribal villages of a backward district of Maharashtra, India with the help of qualitative and quantitative data. Besides infrastructural improvements, the study strongly favors introduction of tribal languages for basic education, provision of personnel for clerical works and proper maintenance of records that reflects the reality of primary schooling. Economic uncertainty and financial hardship are the contributing factors for the age-old disinterest in education among the tribes. Thus increasing the sources of income is the only way to encourage willing participation in basic education.

Key words: India, primary schooling, Maharashtra

INTRODUCTION

Education has been assigned a high priority among many national objectives in India. Education is widely accepted as a necessary tool for attainment of developmental goals. For all developing nations it is recognized that the achievement of national goals and purposes in the modern world are tied to the excellence of education provided for children and youth. Article 45 of the directive principles of the constitution in India urges to provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years (The probe team Public report on basic education in India Oxford, 1999). Since the time of Independence, the Indian government has done its level best to implement the vision of education. To cover all the children in the age group 6 - 14 under the umbrella of elementary education, government decided to provide incentives such as mid- day meal, hostel facility, free textbooks, stationary and uniforms to poorer pupils.

Indian elementary education system as the second largest in the world, with 155.6 million children enrolled in the age group of 6 - 14 years in 1999 - 2000. Yet, India

also has the world's largest number of out of school children. Thus, the gigantic task of meeting the education needs of non-enrolled, dropout and adult illiterates remains before the Indian government. It is well recognized by academicians, policy planners as well as educationists that education is the most substantive and critical input for the development of child as well as society. The universalisation of education has been the central concern of the educational plans and policies ever since our independence. A glance at the provisions made for educational expansion under the various five years plans, the recommendation of bodies like Education Commission (1964 - 1966), the National Policy on Education, Operation blackboard, District Primary Education Program, Sarve Shiksha Abhiyan, etc., would amply convince us that all such recommendations and steps taken thereafter aim at equalization of educational opportunities to all.

However, even after sixty two years of Indian independence, the goal of Universal Elementary Education has not been achieved so far. In spite of the remarkable expansion of the elementary education system in the last two decades, a very large number of children and more among girls and from the deprived section of the society in India continue to be out of school. Out of all the children

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enrolled at primary stage, a very high percentage drops out. Nearly 160 million children of 6 - 14 age group, do not enrolled in school (based on sixth education survey data and available statistics on 5 - 14 age group children in India, NCERT (2002)) and among those who enrolled, nearly half drop out before completing the primary education. About 10 million children of school going age are not attending elementary schooling even today (Aggarwal, 2002: Vol 2) in spite of the fact that in the year 1986 a new education policy was adopted and efforts had been made through successive Five Years Plans to achieve the target of 100% literacy through compulsory and free education for the children. The main causes of the non-implementation of this basic objective of our national policy are well known, viz,

- 1) Financial inadequacy
- 2) Non-availability of a sufficient number of suitable teachers
- 3) Lack of motivation and
- 4) Poverty (Aggarwal, 2002).

Education has still to play a significant role in the overall development of the poor people and especially among the poor tribal population of India where there is high dropout and low participation rates which is again gender sensitive. The impact of tribal education policy after independence can neither be said to be much satisfactory nor can't it be taken to be very disappointing (Thakur, 1995). Studying the shortcomings of the tribal education policy is the need of the hour as tribal people are the most backward communities in India.

Hence, the study grows on the exploratory analysis of primary education in the selected less developed tribal villages of Nandurbar district of Maharashtra. An investigation into the determinants of non-attendance of primary schooling among boys and girls can potentially benefit the quest for knowledge in research, especially when a significant amount of money on primary education is spent every year. According to official estimates as early as 1978, 93% of the population in India was served by a tuition free primary school within one kilometer radius (NCERT, 1989). To understand why are so many children out of school, in spite of apparent access, is the basic aim of the study. Moreover, the problem of tribal illiteracy is not solved. The main reasons are the lack of information facilities especially in the interior areas, large family size of tribals etc (Todankar, 2001).

Area of the study

With this backdrop, we have selected Nandurbar district as an area of research. This district has the maximum tribal population in the state of Maharashtra. The main tribal communities in this district are Bhil, Pawara and Kokani. Reasons for the selection of this district are as follows: The state of Maharashtra as a whole and all dis-

tricts except Nandurbar has added more literates than the net addition in population (Census of India, 2001). Considering the rural-urban breakup of net addition, we see that except Nandurbar, all districts have added more literates than population in the rural areas. Disparity in urban-rural literacy is one of the highest in Nandurbar district (Statement 28 Census of India, 2001) (28.87% points). During the last decade, the absolute number of illiterates for the state as a whole, as well as for all the districts except Nandurbar and Thane has come down. In the rural areas also, the absolute number of illiterates have reduced except Nandurbar. Maximum number of tehsils (6 each) in the last thirty with lowest literacy is in Nandurbar and Gadchiroly districts, both of which are tribal dominated districts of Maharashtra. Despite efforts made by the Governmental and Non-Governmental organisations, only 23.59% tribes are literate in Nandurbar district. Gender disparity in Nandurbar district in literacy rate is also the highest in Maharashtra (rural: male literate 62.13% and female literate 40.50%; 2001, census).

Thus the study focuses on the situation of primary school attendance in some selected villages of Nandurbar district. The main objectives of the study are: to assess the situation of non-attendance of schools among children aged 6 - 12 as reported by their parents and the reasons behind such non attendance and to understand the quality of schools of the selected villages. The study also examines the gender difference in schooling.

METHODOLOGY AND BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

Village selection

Nandurbar district of Maharashtra encompasses six blocks. Out of these six blocks, we selected two namely, Dhargaon and Akkalkua based on the literacy rate (lowest two), tribal population (highest two) and as it was suggested by the District Education Officer (DEO). Next, we have listed out the villages of these selected blocks and then randomly chosen six villages namely, Dhadgaon, Bijary, Molgi, Toranmal, Khuntamodi and Khadki for the primary survey.

Household selection

House listing of the whole village was done and specific information, like whether 6 - 12 years aged child stays in that household, was collected. Then we selected all eligible parents (mother or father) of two small villages, that is, Khadki and Toranmal and randomly selected 40 households from the rest four villages. The total number of households selected was 183 and total number of children (6 - 12 years age) residing in that 183 households were 245. We gathered information from all eligible children from their parents/guardians.

Research tools and techniques

Both qualitative and quantitative tools were applied to capture the situation of primary schooling. The major tools and techniques used are as follows: semi structured interview of parents, structured inter-

view of the head of the schools, four non participatory observations in schools, seven in-depth interviews of educational personnel like District Education Officer (DEO) Block Education Officer (BEO), Sarva Shikshak Adhikari (SSA), Tahasildar and Subject experts. Besides primary data, we have also collected secondary data of education statistics from the Block development Office (BDO) and the data available from school registers.

For the purpose of the study, two separate interview schedules were prepared, that is, for parents and school headmasters. For parents, the schedule contained four parts

- 1) For those households where the child never attained school.
- 2) For those whose child dropped out.
- 3) For those whose child is currently going to school.
- 4) Gender roles.

A structured schedule of headmasters applied to collect the following sets of information: the amenities available in schools, detail of school statistics in the last five years, that is, status of enrollment, pass out, number of teacher and student and their attendance in the last three days, the plans for improvement of the schools, staff position sanctioned, number of classrooms available. Majority of the sample population are Hindus (96%), belonging to Scheduled Tribe category (78%). Fifty percent fathers and 85% mothers are illiterate. Majority of them are labourer. Thirty three percent households experience seasonal migration. Half of them have very poor standard of living. Ninety seven percent lives in thatched household. About four-fifths stay in a nuclear family though the mean household size is seven.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reasons for non- attendance in schools

Out of total 245 children, about 60% are going to primary schools though proportion of boys is much higher than girls in terms of school attendance. Among those students who ever attended schools, about 44% faced some problems in studying (Table 1). Majority of the students do not know how to read and write. A large part of the dropped out students never understood what the teacher teaches. Almost 40% students who are going to school complained that the teacher is not teaching properly.

Reasons for non-attendance (Table 2) as opined by parents are burden of household work, poverty, irregularity of teachers. A majority opined that until and unless the economic status is improving, they wouldn't send their children to school. To elucidate the reasons for non-attendance, two thirds of those who never attended primary schools, said that they are very poor and they cannot afford a single penny for sending their children to school. For them, child's schooling is a luxury. Little more than one fourth of the parents complained about constraints in transportation as a reason for non-attendance in schools. Out of the dropped out children a large proportion of the parents sighted the burden of household work (that is, mainly taking care of the younger siblings and domestic animals as well as cooking), poverty of the household and inability of children to read and write as the other reasons for non-attendance.

Factors affecting non-attendance

We have tried to understand the factors affecting non-attendance in schools though qualitative and quantitative facts. Two binary logistic regressions models are used (for total sample and for girls) considering a series of demographic and socio economic factors, all of which are coming significant in bivariate analysis when prevalence of non-attendance are analysed. We have also included 'attitude towards girls' by constructing a scale containing seven statements. A summative scale has been made and the total scores are categorised as 'unfavorable attitude, 'moderately favorable attitude' and 'favorable attitude' based on first and third quartile values. Reliability of the scale is 0.82. Increasing age, being a girl child, more than six members at household, being a Scheduled tribe, location of schools beyond 1 km and non-favorable attitude towards girls enhances the chances of non-attendance of the children aged 6 - 12 years as a whole and specifically for girls (Table 3). To elaborate, if the family size is seven and above, then the chance of not attending school increases three times. However, after controlling all variables, parent's education and mother's occupation do not affect the school attendance significantly. Being a non scheduled tribe, the probability of not going to school declines by seventy percent when compared with the scheduled tribes. If the school is more than 1 km away, then the chance of non-attendance increases two times. Compared to those parents who have unfavorable attitude towards girls education, the change of non-attendance declines about seventy percent among those who have favorable attitude towards girls and need for education.

Qualitative research reveals that the concept of education is alien to the tribal societies and hence they don't realize the relevance of having it (as said by Sarva Shikshak Adhikari). The medium of Instruction is Marathi, which is different from tribal languages like Adivasi, Pauri etc and hence, it mostly results in one way communication with no reciprocity (as said by Block Development Officer). Locations of schools in hilly, inaccessible areas along with lack of transportation facility further reduce the school attendance (as said by Sarva Shikshak Adhikari). Forty percent population of these villages migrates to Gujarat, a neighbouring state, during the month of October to March. Children are absent in school for 5 - 6 months during such migratory movement (as said by Block Development Officer). 'Schools remain closed for 5-10 days in a month (besides Sundays) as teacher visits the block Office for collecting salary, attending teacher's meet, supplying School Statistics to Block Research Offices and for attending educational training. So, when will they teach?' (as said by a Head Master).

Quality of schools

Some of the indicators used by researchers to capture

Table 1. Problems faced by children in schooling.

Problem in studying and in school	Percent	
	Drop out	Attending
Do not know how to read and write	49.0	42.3
No cloth	19.6	12.7
No book	7.8	7.0
No transport facility	13.7	10.5
No one to teach at home	45.1	26.8
Do not understand what teachers teaches	52.9	25.4
Teacher is not coming to school	15.7	21.8
School often remains closed	13.7	4.2
Teacher is not teaching	----	36.0
Faced at least one problem	45.0	43.4
N	51	148

Table 2. Reasons for non-attendance and dropouts in schools among children 6 - 12 years.

Reasons	Percent	
	Never attended	Drop outs
Problem related to teaching and school		
Teacher irregular	31.91	31.37
School not open	31.91	13.72
Teacher not teaching/ coming	65.95	52.94
No boarding school	17.02	1.96
HH Related factors		
Doing household work	53.19	78.43
Migration of parents	14.89	19.60
Working	57.44	58.82
Caretaker for younger sibling	34.04	39.21
No money, very poor	65.95	56.86
Personal		
Do not know how to read and write	-	43.13
Not interested in studies	14.89	31.37
Illness	31.91	23.52
Village related:		
No transport facility	27.65	5.88
	N = 47	N = 51

school quality are pupil teacher ratio, per pupil expenditure and teacher qualification. In the selected villages, student-teacher ratio ranges from 24.07 to 29.95 based on recorded statistics though in actual terms (based on observed state) it goes up to about 70. Out of 11 surveyed schools, fifth class is available only in two schools though in paper, three schools are having classes up to 7th grade. Seven schools are having only one class where students from 1st to 4th standard sit together. Out of these 11 schools, 4 schools are having

single teacher and two teachers run another 4 schools. Majority of the schools are having only one classroom while two schools have separate rooms for each class in the primary grade. Few schools have a room for every grade. To add to inadequacy of space, even the rooms that exist are often used as offices and storerooms since most schools do not have any space allotted for these purposes. It was common to see classes being held in verandahs and other open spaces. Classes held in open space are bound to be disrupted by monsoon and extremes

Table 3. Determinants of school non-attendance among children and among girls.

Characteristics	Exp(b): total	Exp(b) : for girls
Age of the children	1.387***	1.408***
Sex of the children		
Boy #		
Girl	2.490***	
No of the household members		
Less than seven #		
Seven and above	3.032***	3.105***
Cast		
ST #		
Others	.351**	.303**
Father's education		
Illiterates #		
Literate	.796	.803
Mother's education		
Illiterates #		
Literate	1.150	.1410
Mother's occupation		
Working #		
Housewife	1.599	1.748
Distance to school		
Up to one km #		
Above one km	2.711**	2.645*
SLI		
Low #		
Medium	.597	.582
High	.319***	.369**
Attitude towards Girl		
Unfavorable #		
Moderately favorable	.915	.920
Favorable	.345**	.363**

Dependent variable: 0 = going to school, 1 = not going to school

*** Significant at 1% level, ** significant at 5% level, Significant at 10% level.

disrupted by monsoon and other extremes of weather. In situation where there is no school building at all, the scope for disruption is enormous and the implications for school participation are obvious

Table 4 reveals the amenities of the primary schools in the selected villages. Most of the schools do not have toilet facilities (both for students and teachers), electricity, enough classroom and pucca building (Table 4). Though

about half of the schools do have the provision for mid day meals, in most of cases uncooked rice is distributed to students for lack of space for cooking, fuel and also for a low attendance of students. Provision for toilet facilities, sitting arrangements for students and provision of basic books at schools are the bare minimal requirements for improvement in the quality of schools. The observation of a school in Dhargaon can give us a vivid picture about the

Table 4. Amenities in school as reported by parents.

Facilities	Percent	
	Drop out	Attending
Mid-day meals	58.8	44.3
Drinking water	37.3	43.6
Playground	41.2	43.6
Toilet facility (boys /girls)	19.6	26.4
Free books	72.5	87.2
Free dress	72.5	74.7
Hostel	33.3	11.5
Scholarship	13.7	18.2
Library	5.9	6.8
Blackboard	96.1	86.5
Sitting facilities (desk/ mat)	29.4	37.2
Classroom	88.2	85.8
Electricity	41.2	27.7
Chair for teacher	78.4	78.4
Toilet for teacher(male/female)	9.8	13.5
	N = 51	N = 147

standard of schools we have in tribal areas:

Observation

Kakawadi is a rehabilitated village, 1 km from Dhadgaon. There is a district primary school. The locality where the school is situated is dirty. Teachers as well as students use a public urinal near the school. Students in this school do not get cooked mid day meal but they receive 3 kg rice per month. Researchers visited the school at 2 o'clock. The school contains one classroom where students from 1st standard to 4th standard sit together. The same room is also been used as a storeroom for rice grains, stationeries and wood. A table and two chairs for teachers are found in a half-broken condition. The teacher entered the class at 3 o'clock. There were 32 students and the number of enrolled students was 45, though the teacher recorded hundred percent attendances. The small classroom was over crowded.

Teacher gave same instructions to all the students. Students were sitting in groups. Some were playing games with a small stone (khade-khade), some were playing head and tail (chhapa-kata) while some were scratching on the books and some were going outside without taking permission from the teacher. Out of 32 students, only four students had a chappal and three students had a school bag. Some students were sitting along with their younger siblings who have not yet enrolled in schools. Many of the students did not know how to read and write. After the class the teacher said to the researcher 'I am helpless; I am alone here and managing four classes along with maintaining office documentations. The officials at the head office want a lot

of information from us. How can I manage alone both teaching and clerical job?"

From qualitative study it is observed that number of teachers in active service hardly ever crosses two in number and that too they attend school less than twice in a week. Generally majority of the schools have got one room which is also used as a store room for wood, rice grains, straw etc. School timing is generally between 2 pm to 3 pm although officially it maintains 10 am - 4 pm periodicity. Although the average attendance ranges between 30 – 40%, the teacher records 100% attendance in official records. Classes 1 - 4 are given the same instructions without any differentiation in syllabus or content. Even the medium of instruction (Marathi) is foreign to almost all the tribal students. The teachers feel victimized for getting this assignment and they bid their time for the next transfer. Thus majority of the teachers are dissatisfied with very low motivation level. Instances of elder siblings accompanying their younger brothers and sisters to schools in the absence of proper caretaker at home are also recorded. Fifty percent of schools do not distribute mid- day meals but provide some uncooked rice per student per month on any particular day.

Majority of the parents demanded for 'good quality schools' that pertains to regularity of teachers, concrete school buildings and provision of basic amenities. They have demanded the provision of drinking water and toilet facility in schools. Teachers have requested for storage facility of drinking water, electricity connection and construction of more classrooms and renovation of school buildings. They have also suggested to increase the consciousnesses of parents regarding the need for education through folk media. However, government is trying its best to universalize elementary education, as it is evident

from BDO's comments: "The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) scheme has a target of 100% enrollment. We have reached very near to our target to enroll all children. But after enrollment, number of parents migrate to Gujarat or nearby cities during October to March. The parents are apathetic in children's education. For these migrated children, we arrange "Sakhar Shala". The basic idea of "Sakhar Shala" is making of temporary arrangement for teaching the migrated children. Now 202 primary schools in Akrani and 236 primary schools in Akkalkuwa are managed by Zilla Parishad. We try to set up primary school in each and every village'. 'We provide "Wasti shala" for each Pada if it is demanded by parents. "Wasti Shala" is a scheme to bring each and every child to school. In this scheme we appoint a local educated person as a "Swayamsevi Shikshak" (volunteer teacher) and give an honorarium of Rs. 2000/- per month. He/she teaches in local languages."

Gender differentials in school enrollment

The gender bias in school attendance is very high at the primary level, though such trend is rapidly declining at the upper primary level of education in Maharashtra. However, the situation of the poor districts and especially of the poor communities is not as affirmative as it is found in Maharashtra. Figure 1 shows the trend of proportional changes in the enrolment ratio in the study area during the period 1999 - 2000 to the 2004 - 2005 based on school statistics. Proportional change is calculated as $(x_{t+n} - x_t) / x_t$ and expressed in percentage. It can be seen from the figure that proportional changes in enrolment have not improved continuously for both girls and boys while reduction is more significant in case of girls. The proportional change of enrolment ratio for boys has dropped drastically from 10% in the year 1999 - 2000/2000 - 2001 to -0.05% in 2002 - 2003/2003 - 2004 academic year and then improved slightly to 3% in 2003 - 2004/2004 - 2005. While for girls the situation is worse - it had been started declining from 5% in the year 1999 - 2000/2000 - 2001 to more than - 11% in the year of 2001 - 2002/2002 - 2003 and started moving upward very slowly and hovering around - 5% during the period 2002 - 2003/2003 - 2004 and 2003 - 2004/2004 - 2005. Data also reveals that over the year no considerable improvement has been taken place in enrollment for class one and two, but contrary to this, improvement is noticeable in the higher classes (figure not shown). Proportion change in enrollment by grades for all the four classes declined drastically for girls and their situation is comparably worse than their male counterparts. This is primarily due to higher dropout for girls at higher classes.

Summary and policy relevance

Educational planning in India does not take into account

the educational needs and aspirations of the poor people who want to send their children to the pasture rather than to the schools. Despite efforts made by the government and non-government organizations, the problem of tribal education is an enigma. The main reasons for this are the lack of information facilities especially in the interior areas along with very poor transport facility. Teachers and students have to walk 5 - 6 km daily to reach their school⁹. These problems get more aggravated during rainy season. Majority of the schools doesn't provide residential facility for the teachers and student. Boys and girls from these interior villages prefer to go for work instead of attending school that are far away from their village. Secondly, the family size in many cases is very large (12 - 14 persons in each family) and for feeding these members, it becomes compulsory for them to go to work. Moreover, there is a lack of awareness regarding the importance of education. The tribes have their own folk songs, myths, traditions and stories. The tribal children would only feel a sense of oneness in their study and get interested in the school if their cultural aspects are embedded in the school curriculum. It is, therefore, necessary to keep these aspects in view while framing the syllabus.

The tremendous accomplishment of primary education in Himachal Pradesh, one of the mountainous states of this country, is the result of the combined effort of government and parents. Let's look at the success story of this state that supports a large proportion of deprived population. When children join school, their parents appear particular about school attendance and children persist in school at least till the end of primary school. What is it that makes Himachali parents willing to surmount barriers like access and cost and continue to send children to school? In terms of physical infrastructure, the schooling system is modest. Himachal has a few pucca or all-weather schools (although the proportion of such school is increasing), but the schools on the whole look sturdy and are often aesthetically appearing. Similarly, the teacher equipment and school facilities do not seem to be very good but there is at least a basic minimum level of infrastructure. Apart from this, children have their textbook-a vital need, given the education system. Just as vital is the presence of an adequate number of pupil-teacher ratio which is 30:1 in Himachal. This means that children are able to get adequate attention. The proportion of single-teacher schools is very small (and these are new schools with only 1 or 2 classes). A system of Para-teachers has been introduced where the `V Ts` or voluntary teachers assist the main teachers. Schooling infrastructure is often minimal, but teachers teach and parents send their children to school in mountainous districts like Lahaul and Spiti and Kinnaur are making gigantic strides in literacy rates. It seems that proper schools are more efficient in universalizing elementary education in the long run. Special schemes like operation Blackboard (OB) have

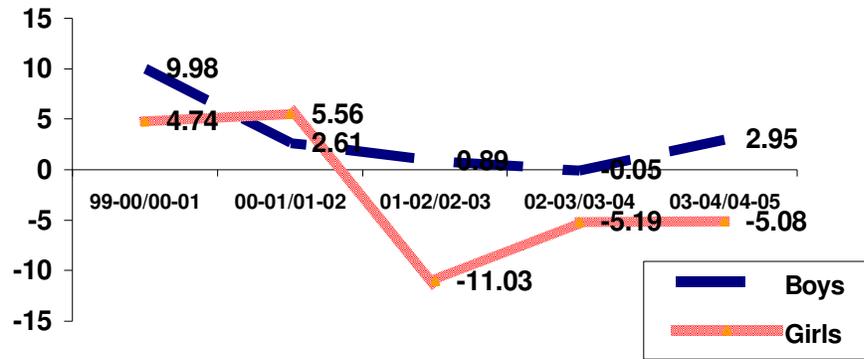


Figure 1. Proportional change of enrollement in academic year by gender.

been taken very seriously by the government and the Himachal government has also contributed some of its own schemes that emphasizes physical education, the VT system, and flexible response to the agricultural calendar or to climatic conditions. Other development indicators and Education Advance Roads are especially vital to the development of hilly region where neither bullock carts nor railways are of much use. Roads are two to four times as expensive to build in the hills as in the plains. The Himachal government focused on expanding the road system from the start. The effort of the state has been supplemented by the work of the Border Roads organization, which built roads in the most difficult terrain like Lahaul and Spiti because of the strategic importance of these areas. The expansion of the system was immensely valuable in generating jobs in road construction and in enabling Himachal to get employment elsewhere as in facilitating trade and in allowing the provision of other public services including education. More than about 95% of households own at least a small amount of land. Such a pattern of land distribution means some measure of independences. Perhaps it is one reason why even the poorer parents in Himachal did not feel helpless about speaking up about school matters. It is also perhaps a reason that the average parent feels comfortable about sending children to school. Many households in Himachal have at least one source of stable service income apart from their agrarian base.

Now, if we look at our study area, we can point out a number of loop holes; like poor school infrastructure, transportation bottleneck, high pupil- teacher ratios, unnecessary burden on teachers for clerical works, poor quality of teaching, insincerity of students, poor attendance and high drop outs especially for girls, problem in language of instruction and economic constraints. We need to popularize the fundamental utility of education; otherwise children would be failing to attend the basic education. Enhancing the power of women is necessary to make them understand the need for girl’s education. While to retain children in schools some lucrative schemes like adding extra classes that they like, providing

good quality mid day meal etc are required. Considering the fact that the gender difference in schools with respect to girl child is unfavourable, compulsory vocational training along with regular study has to be included in the course curriculum. This training can augment future earning potential for these girls who will benefit from dual utility of basic education along with an initiation into some basic vocational practices (Chattopadhyay et al., 2005). There must be awareness campaign, surprise check (other than state government check) and teacher’s absence should be highlighted as ethically bad. In country like India, religious leaders have their say, if it is considered morally bad or religiously bad, the poor performance of teachers will be hatred and hence less.

Economic uncertainty and financial hardship are the contributing factors for the age-old disinterest in education among the tribes of the less developed districts of Maharashtra. Thus increasing the sources of income is the only way to encourage willing participation in basic education. In this connection it is better to involve private sector’s participation. Private – public partnership could be encouraged to actively promote income generating schemes, like contract farming on condition that Government will extend tax holidays to the sponsoring companies if they provide financial and infrastructure support to take care of the educational requirement of the kiths and kins of the poor. Besides infrastructural improvements, the study strongly favors introduction of local languages for basic education, provision of personnel for clerical works and proper maintenance of records that reflects the reality of primary schooling.

It is also evident from our study that the medium of instruction is the greatest disconnect in the education system. It makes sense to have teachers from the same community or at least people communicating the same language as instructors. In this connection it is worthwhile to highlight the efficacy of the innovation of “Samaj Sevi Shikshak” which could be further developed. A fact that needs to be highlighted is the discordance of observed and recorded data regarding the quality of schools. In paper, all the schools have experienced regular inspection,

a very favorable student-teacher ratio and school attendance, though in reality the scenario is utterly dull. Teaching initiatives in local languages is a must for them. People must be taught and learn in everyday contexts and much learning must be centred on the activities of the cultural calendar and ceremonial events. Learning should be made integral to and relevant to life as it has been observed in many parts of South and Central America which are predominantly inhabited by indigenous people. Western style education which is followed by the Indian system of education makes little effort to link numeracy to learners' prior knowledge and culture and hence fails to build on their understanding. Why can't we develop a new system of education for the poor and indigenous population, not with the contention to make them degree holder but to help them learning and facing everyday life with dignity? There is a need of maintaining culture and the traditional empirical knowledge which is encapsulated in language in the face of increasing socio-economic and cultural globalization! In those states of India where ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin dominate, a child belonging to such a minority or is indigenous shall not be denied the right to profess and practice his or her own language, as it is observed in many countries across the globes. Research proves that beginning schooling in the children's first language and using his language for continued learning and development is the best way for children to develop to their full potential. Vernacular elementary education and bi-lingual primary education should not be denied in any respect. In Papua new Guiana, Education Reform endorses literacy for children to begin in vernacular with the first steps of bridging beginning in the 3rd year of learning (Elementary 2). Then Bi-lingual learning continues through lower primary (Grades 3 to 5). Research has indicated that majority of schools have completely bridged by upper primary (Grades 6 to 8). Data shows that 435 local languages are used in elementary schools throughout the country. To site our example, in 2005, the Education department of the Tripura state decided to give a push to Kok-Borok as a medium of instruction at the Junior Basic level (Classes I to V), to help tribal students learn in their mother tongue. Tribes are also eager to study in their mother tongue, to understand their culture and literature more deeply. However, the lack of qualified teachers has been a problem and also the transition to the upper primary levels, where they are taught in another regional language, Bengali, is proving difficult for those who are being taught in local language. Hence, it is also necessary to train teachers in bilinguals at the transitional levels.

As transportation is one of the major bottle necks for teachers to come to the schools regularly, teachers and trainers at elementary level must be selected by the community, for the community and they will be monitored by the local governance. Consultation with the local community is critical in developing appropriate programs

for tribal students. Maintaining registers and clerical jobs must be done by the para teachers while teachers must be trained for elementary level teaching. Integrated culturally relevant thematic curriculum based upon cultural calendar should be developed by teachers and communities. Teachers should be obliged to produce teaching and learning materials while teaching. Technical and financial support for curricula and materials production is also necessary. New skills must be imparted that enhances the cultural heritage.

Indian education system has also declared in its policy plan that Universal Elementary Education (UEE) is contextual. The contextuality varies widely across the country. Even in a State like Kerala, where participation is near universal, much requires to be done in respect of quality and achievement. In such states, the pursuit of UEE would be mainly in the areas of quality, facilities and achievement, while in other states participation and demand aspects would need more attention. Therefore, the attempt would be to prepare district-specific and population-specific plans for UEE within the broad strategy frame of micro planning through people's participation. The strides made by our government for elementary education needs proper implementation. As hunger is more dangerous than illiteracy, the policy makers need to sort out and prioritize area specific problems. First and foremost there is a need to implement programs for a stable earning through land reform, extension of irrigation, small scale industrialization and provision of basic amenities for mere survival of the poor. Public – private partnership in innovative entrepreneurship is necessary to improve the demand as well as the supply side. Provision of transportation and basic amenities in schools need to be guaranteed to attract and retain pupils. If Himachalis can make success in the midst of the mountain terrain, Maharashtra can also do the same.

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