DELIVERING QUALITY EDUCATION TO GIRLS FROM PARTICULARLY VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS (PVTGs) IN INDIA

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: The Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are the least developed among all the communities in India. In spite of multiple state-supported schemes to bring about positive changes in their lives, the results have been abysmally poor. This study aims at identifying the social and cultural barriers that have prevented school-going PVTG girls to participate in education and to suggest the enablers that would facilitate their level of participation in education.

Methodology: The study was conducted in Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha (India) comprising four PVTGs, namely, Paudi Bhuiany, Lodha, Hill Kharia, and Mankidia. For the selection of villages in the districts, a list of villages inhabited by these four tribes was prepared. After filtering out the populated villages, a random selection of four villages was made for each selected tribe. The study included PVTG girls in the age group of 6-14 years, and 80 girls, including both school-going students, and out-of-school girls were randomly accessed to meet the objectives of the study. A mixed-method approach was adopted to identify the barriers to participation in education. Firstly, the primary responses were collected during a five-month period from Aug-Dec, 2018 by using three separate interview schedules for the girls, their parents, and the school teachers. Data triangulation was further done through four focused group discussions (FGD) in the selected villages. The feedbacks thus received were used to prepare the proposed educational structure for the PVTG girls. Additionally, content analysis of all the audio-visual recordings collected during the fieldwork was done to enumerate the case-studies pertaining to each district.

Main Findings: The results indicate that the dropout percentage is more among students in classes VI-VII as compared to lower classes. Assisting in household work and in agricultural lands during harvest season, single-teacher schools, which are a reality in many remote schools of the districts, and predominantly male teachers in day-schools, are other hindering factors.

Applications of this study: The study holds implications for researchers and scholars working in the fields of tribal studies and education and other allied areas. It can assist the policymakers in taking corrective measures to address some of the persistent issues relating to tribal girl-child education.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The novelty of the paper lies in the proposed methodical model that takes into account the ground-level realities, which need to be addressed to enhance the tribal girls’ participation in quality education. Negative and positive influences of siblings staying and studying in the same residential schools have been identified in this study which could be taken up for further research.

Keywords: Quality Education, PVTGs, SDGs, Tribal Girls, Odisha

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Globally, education is one of the driving forces that have been observed to bring about positive changes in the lives of the poor and the downtrodden. It is also the cornerstone for building a civilized society Murthy (2010). No wonder then that it is one of the primary focuses of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Thus, SDG 4 aims at achieving free primary and secondary schooling by 2030, for all girls and boys worldwide. Yet, the strong goals of education in SDG 4 are still not enough to eliminate the challenges in some “developing regions due to high levels of poverty, armed conflicts, and other emergencies.” As per the data on United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 web content and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) factsheet 2018, even though enrolment in primary education in developing countries has reached 91%, yet ~ 63 million primary-aged children remain out of school, with more than half of them are in sub-Saharan Africa. In developing countries, one in four girls is not in school; about half of all out-of-school
children of primary school age live in conflict-affected areas and 103 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills, out of which more than 60 percent are women. Globally, 6 out of 10 children and adolescents are not achieving a minimum level of proficiency in reading and math.” In this dismal scenario, one of the primary focuses of governments worldwide today is to bridge the gap in access to quality education among the haves and have-nots, so that a certain level of parity is achieved. Now, priority has shifted from equality to equity, quantity to quality and learning to its sustainability. In addition, quality should include a commitment to education for all, total participation in education by all stakeholders, and relevant course content to sustain learning among the learners.

India, with its huge and diverse population base, is one of the key developing countries that aspire to achieve quality education for all its citizens by 2030. However, with a total average annual dropout rate for the Scheduled Tribes being 40.2% for primary, upper-primary and secondary levels, as per data accessed from the Educational Statistics at Glance-2018, it remains to be seen how far SDG 4 can be achieved. The same report also shows that a high incidence of dropout among boys was due to their economic commitment and for girls, the major barrier was domestic activities. With such barriers and dropout rate s, the objective of achieving ‘quality education’ for all becomes a distant dream unless immediate measures are taken to counter the exodus. Without doubt, quality education for all should be the basic hallmark of a civilized society. Sadly, even in this 21st century critically low level of education among children from certain marginalized communities of the country is a bitter reality that we have to face on a regular basis. It is universally recognized that education is one of the most influential forces of change in society. The state systems in modern societies endeavor to provide quality education for all learners so that they are able to reach their full potential. Consequently, they are able to meaningfully contribute to and participate in that society throughout their lives. The responsibility of the education system is to develop and sustain such learning based on the fact that education is a fundamental right. The Right to Education Act, 2009 ensures the same. However, the poor literacy rate and educational attainment among a few segments of the population demand a detailed study into it. The problem becomes more for certain groups among this population who are further segmented because of their gender and level of primitiveness. Education of SC and ST girls is a major concern, as they are ‘often doubly disadvantaged due to their social status and gender’ Sedwal and Kamat (2011). The barriers to participating in education are generally not observed to be linked to intellectual capabilities. Rather, socio-cultural barriers play a significant role. The understanding of such barriers enables policy formulation and implementing agencies to design result-oriented strategies for achieving better results.

As per Census 2011, STs account for 8.6% of India’s population. They are mostly found in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Gujarath, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Karnataka. Census 2011 shows that around 83.2% of the total ST population of the country belong to these states. The other 15.3% of the ST population is concentrated in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Jammu & Kashmir, Tripura, Mizoram, Bihar, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu. A total of 18.7% of the geographical area of the country, comprising of some of the remotest, inaccessible and rugged forest areas, are home to these tribes. Around 705 tribal communities exist in India today, speaking 105 languages in addition to another 225 secondary dialects (Census 2011). The Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are the least developed among all the communities in India. The reasons for their backwardness are multi-dimensional, ranging from poverty, health, livelihood, education, housing, access, and sanitation. In fact, their issues have remained unsolved even at the onset of the 21st century, and in spite of numerous state-supported schemes to bring about positive change in their lives; the results have been few and far between. Lack of educational advancement among the PVTGs is a critical element in these modern times. The progress is observed to be insignificant despite the implementation of several beneficial programs. Data shows that the literacy rate among the PVTGs is remarkably low. For a state like Odisha, it is a major concern as it has the highest number of PVTGs (13 communities out of 75 in the country). The Census 2011 data tells us that the PVTGs of Odisha has the lowest literacy rate, and it is ‘critically low’ among the girls. In this context, it is essential to understand the barriers that prevent the PVTG girls to participate in school education so to design efficient models that can enhance participation in school education and subsequently achieve some level of educational development.

THE PVTGs: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Right from the colonial period researchers have tried to gain insight into the cultural and social life of these indigenous communities subsisting in some of the most hostile and inaccessible locations of the country. One of the initial studies on PVTGs was the ethnographic study titled “The Kharia” by Roy and & roy (1937), discussed in detail the culture and society of the present day PVTG, the Hill Kharias. The Kharia tribe is primarily found in Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh and Sambalpur districts of Odisha, apart from a few other locations of the country Vidyarthi (1980). The tribe is located in
different geographical locations with different nomenclatures like ‘Hill Kharia’ in the east, ‘Dudh Kharia’ in the central region and ‘Dhelki Kharia’ in the western region. Among the three classifications, the Hill Kharias keep themselves away from outsiders and are one among the PVTGs Basu and Kshatriya (1999). The literacy rate of Kharia tribe that includes all the above-mentioned tribes is 58.5%, with female literacy rate being 50.8%, as per Census 2011. No separate figures though are available for the Hill Kharia tribe. Some scholars have elucidated about the nutrition of these PVTGs e.g., due to lack of information about nutritional foods, the prevalence of thinness is higher among the Lodha girls in comparison to boys Das and Bose (2011). Even though there has been much improvement in educational infrastructure in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha, the level of primary education among the tribal children is nothing remarkable to speak Behera (2015). The literacy rate of the STs in the district is only 39% as per Census 2011. A high level of incongruity between their social and cultural environment and school curriculum is observed to be posing a major obstacle in their access to education.

The Mankidia tribe, which has a major presence in Mayurbhanj district, is one of the most marginalized and undeveloped of the PVTGs with a ‘critically low’ population. They still rely upon the primitive hunter-gatherer method for their subsistence, majorly concentrating on their hunting skills and collection of minor forest produce. Census 2011 shows their literacy rate to be only 21.14%, which is, of course, an improvement on the 5.56% recorded in 2001. Their female literacy rate is recorded to be 16.1% as per Census 2011. The Mankidia tribe in Odisha have to face numerous difficulties in their day-to-day existence (Nayak & Das 2014). They speak the Mundari dialect and are thinly spread across different districts of the state with varied names such as Birhor, Mankidi, Mankiria, Mankidia, and Mankirdia. The Mankidias are divided into two groups as per their habitation, i.e. the ‘Uthals’ and the ‘Jagis’. The former is nomadic in nature, while the latter is a sedentary settler. Lodha community inhabits the hilly tracts of Mayurbhanj district of Odisha. They are mainly concentrated in Suliapada and Moroda blocks of Mayurbhanj district. They were labeled as a ‘criminal tribe’ during the colonial rule. There is an acute chronic energy deficiency among the men of Lodha community in Mayurbhanj district Goswami (2014). Till date, the Lodhas have no linguistic identity of their own Satpathy (2012). They speak a mixture of Odia, Hindi and Bengali, Bengali because of the district’s proximity to West Bengal. Due to the lack of codification and restoration of tribal literature, identification and improvement of tribal language have been hampered. In addition, they also have a very low literacy rate. The Lodha community is not only socially and economically backward but also their language is at risk. The total literacy rate of Lodha tribe is 43.1%, with female literacy rate being 35.1%, as per Census 2011.

Paudi Bhuiyans inhabit the ‘hilly terrains’ of Sundargarh district of Odisha. The name ‘Paudi bhuiyan’ comes from the Sanskrit word bhooni, which means earth. There is a continuous and sincere effort for tribal upliftment by the government through its various schemes and policies, but the problems persist due to improper implementation and monitoring, which creates barriers in advancement Pradhan (2010). In addition, there is a high prevalence of malnourishment among the Paudi Bhuiyans Rath (2004). The literacy rate of Bhuiyan tribe is 63.1%, with female literacy rate being 51.6%, as per Census 2011. No separate figures are available for the Paudi Bhuiyan tribe also. The PVTGs in India has survived against all odds but their marginalized situation has hindered their access to an essential need like education. Within the segments of assimilation, the existing anomalies in our education system have chained their educational integration. Hence, it has led to appalling consequences such as poor health, poverty, loss of identity, and high level of illiteracy, among others. Among the state initiatives, the Right to Education (RTE) Act, the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shikshya Abhiyaan (RMSA) scheme, availability of Residential Schools and other state facilities and benefits have certainly encouraged their access to education, but a lot remains to be done to monitor the barriers to education. Ashrams and educational complexes provide residential and free facilities but have their own weaknesses Garnaik and Barik (2012). The class differences observed between tribal students and teachers, a generalized school timetable and holidays prompt certain unseen bias. Similarly, absenteeism due to agricultural necessities, sibling care, participating in tribal festivals, going to weekly markets, and helping their family to collect minor produce Mishra (2015) has resulted in obstacles for girls to pursue education. The school calendar assisting urban lifestyle has brought them to crossroads Ghosh (2007). A need thus exists to strengthen their education through their indigenous systems and values. The education system must thus synchronize subjectively with intended recipients Govinda and Josephine (2004) so to attain the objective of quality education.

**THE CURRENT STUDY**

This article reports on a study that was undertaken in the eastern India state of Odisha that has one of the highest tribal populations in the country. As per Census 2011, Odisha has 22.8% tribal population spread across the whole state. As noted above, there are 13 PVTGs in Odisha, namely, Birhor, Bonda, Didayi, Dongria-Kandha, Juang, Hill-Kharia, Kutia-Khanda, Lanjia-Saora, Lodha, Mankidia, Paudi-Bhuyan, Saora, and Chukitia-Bhunjia inhabiting over 542 villages. They
spread across 12 districts of the state, and inhabit some of the remotest forests and hilly regions. Their current population is 78519 and literacy rate is 24.04 percent (Census 2011). The study was conducted in two scheduled districts of Odisha – Sundargarh, and Mayurbhanj – comprising four PVTGs. These PVTGs are the Paudi Bhuiyans (in Sundargarh district), and the Lodhas, Mankidias and the Hill Kharias (in Mayurbhanj district). The Mankidias are among the most endangered and isolated tribal groups of the country with a population less than 1000 (Tribal Committee Report, May-June 2014). Census 2011 shows a higher population figure for the Mankidias (2222) than the Tribal Committee Report, but the number is still critically low.

The study is based on the assumption that the beliefs and practices of these indigenous groups are acting as impermeable membranes in their participation in formal education. The universal elementary education strategies are not fully utilized to achieve better participation. Further, the insignificant participation of girls from PVTGs needs serious deliberation. Increasing enrolments after the implementation of Right to Education Act, 2009 is not sustaining, rather resulting in dropouts or non-participation. In such context, exploration of mechanisms of enrolment, resistance from people, interventions of external agencies, incentives and follow-up activities would provide a framework to understand the barriers for girls from PVTGs to participate in formal education. This would also serve as a model to understand the scope for further interventions and to identify the enablers that could ensure the participation of girls in school education. The target group of the study was girls of school-going age (6-14 years) from two scheduled districts of Odisha. The aim of the study was two-fold – to identify the social and cultural barriers for girls belonging to PVTGs to participate in education, and to suggest the enablers that would facilitate the level of participation in education. Some of the key questions that the study seeks to answer are:

- What is the rate of participation of PVTG girls in formal education?
- Why are the girls not actively participating in school education?
- What can be done to enable the girls to increase their participation in school education?

For the selection of villages in the districts, a list of villages inhabited by these four tribes was prepared. After filtering out the populated villages, a random selection of four villages was made for each selected tribe. The study included PVTG girls in the age group of 6-14 years, and 80 girls, including both school-going students, and out-of-school girls were randomly accessed to meet the objectives of the study. A mixed-method approach was adopted to identify the barriers to participation in education. Firstly, the primary responses were collected during a five-month period from Aug-Dec, 2018 by using three separate interview schedules for the girls, their parents, and the school teachers. Data triangulation was further done through four focused group discussions (FGD) in the selected villages. The feedbacks thus received were used to prepare the proposed educational structure for the PVTG girls. Additionally, content analysis of all the audio-visual recordings collected during the fieldwork was done to enumerate the case-studies pertaining to each district. The elicited results were qualitatively analyzed and the problem areas that hinder school learning were thus identified. Not only the barriers but also the plausible solutions to the problems were also subsequently elicited from the various interactions with all the stakeholders of the study.

**KEY FINDINGS: REASONS FOR DROPOUT OF PVTG GIRL STUDENTS**

As per data accessed from the interactions with the various stakeholders of the study, the following are some of the key reasons why the PVTG girls are not actively participating in school education. Irrespective of the tribe, the major reasons for dropout were observed to be the same. The dropout percentage was observed to be more among students in classes VI-VII as compared to lower classes. It is obvious that once the girl reaches a certain age i.e. around 13-15, the tribal parents become averse to sending the children to school. Assisting in household work and in agricultural lands during harvest season was found to be the single-most hindrance to education among these girls. A single-teacher school, which is a reality in many remote schools of the districts, was another barrier to education, not only for the girl students but also for all students studying in these schools. Additionally, predominantly male teachers in day-schools was another hindering factor that makes tribal girls feel uncomfortable in their schools which results in dropouts.

The fundamental duty of parents is to assist their children in attaining education. However, some tribal families believe that education will unsettle their daughters from their traditional ways of making ends meet. They perceive that loss of workforce in the form of children going to schools would subsequently result in creating the twin burden of loss of income, and lack of meeting the family expenses. They believe that for partaking of social obligations, formal education is irrelevant...
for girls. A study among Irula tribe students in Tamil Nadu showed that post-menarche dropout, corporal punishment, and verbal abuse dents quality education Krishna and Prathiba (2016). Except some model residential schools, the dilapidated condition of schools; lack of teachers knowing the students’ mother tongues; lack of motivation among both teachers and students; lack of awareness about various government schemes that facilitate tribal children’s education; and sometimes, attitudinal factors of community members bordering on extreme negativity, are some of the major issues that fuel high dropout rate among the PVTG girls.

It is quantified that the PVTG matriculates are below 3% and degree holders are almost negligible Nayak (2010). A report by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) shows that Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha have the highest number of assault, insult, and abduction of ST girls and women (MoTA Annual Report 2016-17). No wonder then that many a times parents of adolescent girls prefer to keep them out of school apprehending risk and danger to their wards’ well-being. Other issues that came to the forefront upon our discussion with the girls are that sometimes they are berated by their teachers for being untidy and uncouth, and the senior girls are sometimes asked by their teachers to clean and sweep the school area. Even though they do it without any negative thoughts, this is something, which their teachers would never subject to their urban school counterparts studying in private schools. Concern for security in residential schools, the poor pupil-teacher ratio of 120:1 (NCERT, 2017), in addition to lack of proper infrastructural facilities, and lack of attention from teachers, certainly affects students learning capabilities.

Some other key issues were also highlighted during the data collection process. Single-teacher schools in remote regions and single-classroom schools have a variety of problems. The schools may often be closed if there is only one teacher. In such schools and even in other schools where only one classroom is available despite having more than one teacher, the students of higher classes may feel ashamed if the teacher rebukes them in front of others. The tribal beliefs on the importance of informal education also obstruct their children from acquiring modern education. Hence, post-school opportunities debated within the tribal clusters influence their views on schools and any further education Chakraborty (2016). As per Unified District Information System for Education (U-DISE), 2011-14 data, some parts of the two districts are under left-wing extremists who obstruct any attempt by parents for formal education for their children. In some instances elopement and marriage, and teenage pregnancy also block any progress of the girl’s education. The respondents also revealed that the girls who drop out and marry early, many times influence other girls to leave school and marry, and this subsequently creates a cascading effect. It was also observed that some students get promotion even if they are poor in many subjects, which has emerged as a disturbing element in literacy, was also noted among the PVTG learners of the two study districts Bhagavatheevarana et al. (2016).

CASE STUDY REPORTS

Sundargarh District

In the Sundargarh district, a state-sponsored Paudi Bhuiyan Development Agency (PBDA) looks after the development and issues related to the tribe. From the compiled responses accessed from the students, teachers, and head-teachers, we found that the academic performance of the Paudi Bhuiyan girls is not up to mark even in the residential school set-up. The system seems to be functioning just to show that these girls are literate. During the examination, answer dictation prevails in order to promote them. The no-detention policy that was started with a noble objective mind in mind is not giving the desired results. Neither teachers nor students are serious about the examinations. Girls who have joined schools late face both learning and discrimination problems. On the positive side, students get good company as they belong to the Paudi Bhuiyan tribe, however, keeping these girls limited to their own community creates a situation where they learn and imbibe those things, which they had learned earlier, and get restricted from learning new things. This chains them in a matrix of a similar way of thinking and living without an opportunity to learn from their peer group.

Girls from interior areas are shy, they understand Odia language; however, during exams, they face difficulty in writing and make numerous grammatical mistakes. The complex is helpful for them, as they attend school, and get everything for free, however, the beneficiaries and their parents only recognize the free facilities, and do not show any proper interest in learning anything. On the positive side, their younger siblings also stay and study in residential schools because their elder sisters’ study in these schools, otherwise, retention would be almost impossible. Compared to day schools, residential schools are always better for these girls. Here, they have to attend classes every day under compulsion, and, that is any far better than missing a day in school for one reason or other. In day schools, students attend classes only for the mid-day meals, and after that is over the students simply leave the school. The students in the residential schools voiced their need for more number of female teachers as they would be able to understand their problems better as compared to male teachers. It could
largely compensate for the safety and security issue s of the girls.

Sometimes dropouts also occur due to family-related issues, involving a parent’s death, or remarriage. Some parents also claimed that privileges in education provided to certain families have compelled them to convert to Christianity and send their children to missionary schools. In many cases, the girls have also eloped at an early age, or good bride price has tempted their parents to stop their daughter’s education midway. Sometimes girls are forced to stop their studies because of their father’s drinking habits and domestic violence against their mother. Poverty, alcoholism, domestic violence, constant burden among parents to make ends meet, and early marriage among girls, are some of the pressing issues that require urgent attention if we wish to meet the SDG 4 goal of quality education for all.

Mayurbhanj District

Altogether eight villages each for Mankidia and Hill Kharia tribes were accessed to gather data for the study. The state-sponsored Hill Kharia and Mankidia Development Agency (HKMDA) looks after all major issues related to the tribes. The selected Hill Kharia villages (i.e. Gothasahi, Khejuria, Salabani, and Kundabadi) in Mayurbhanj district had Anganwadi centers (state-supported day-care centers), but very few parents encourage their children to go to these centers. The Hill Kharia villages under HKMDA micro-project have better access to state-supported interventions, especially education. However, the literacy rate among the tribes continues to be bleak. They believe in the traditional system of education, which is informal, practical, and need-based. This helps them to preserve solidarity and loyalty to their customs. Therefore, only a few have accepted the formal school system. The illiterate family members do not bother much about their children’s education.

Most children attend classes only for the mid-day meal and their motivation towards studies is very poor. Many remote schools have few female teachers and absenteeism makes the situation worse. Moreover, educational stratification exists i.e. the community members maintain distance from other members of the community who have better educational status. For example, if a girl or boy from Hill Kharia family goes to school, the neighbors differentiate and isolate them, which instill negativity about education and results in dropout. The common problem among Mankidia tribe is that parents engage children in collecting forest produce. The Mankidia girls rarely visit their schools, and child marriage is rampant. Some families were observed to have converted to Christianity, which plays a major role in their school education. These families are more motivated to send their wards to schools, both state-supported schools, and missionary schools.

Data on the Lodha tribe was accessed from four villages which has a predominantly Lodha population. According to the 2015-16 survey report by Lodha Development Agency (LDA), the literacy rate shows an increasing trend. Education among the Lodha tribal group has improved with the establishment of an educational complex at one of the villages, which prioritizes girl-child education. The officials have built up a system that actively encourages the tribal parents to allow their daughters to engage in studies. Presently, 370 Lodha girls reside in the complex. During the year 2016-2017, 16 girls appeared for their school board examination and out of them, 15 are pursuing higher studies. During the survey, around 52 girls were about to appear the next High School Certificate (HSC) examination. This is a truly positive result of state intervention among low literate tribes of the state. After completion of their high school, the students get full financial assistance for their higher studies and vocational training. All these positive interventions have had a cascading effect, which is bringing more and more girls to this particular residential school.

The LDA also organizes several vocational training programs with the provision of daily allowances. The girls participate in sports and cultural activities too which aids towards confidence building. Groups of girls have already been awarded in district-level sports competitions. Besides, there is a provision for teaching and learning sewing among Lodha girls. Vocational training has truly become a boon for them. Both teachers and parents of school-going children actively participate in workshops to create an education-conscious society. It shows how this tribe, with the help of positive state interventions, is trying to be a part of the civil society. Yet, the dropout rate is quite high in remote places. Therefore, emphasis on effective implementation of state-supported schemes is essential for quality education for all.

Proposed Model for Addressing the Gap

From our interactions with the various stakeholders, the following model is thus proposed for bridging the gap currently existing in providing quality education to some of the most marginalized communities of the country (see Figure 1). Anganwadis (state-supported pre-primary schools) can play the role that good nursery schools play in an urban set-up. It is the first step in a child’s road to quality education. Policymakers must understand this and make the Anganwadis robust and effective, with proper infrastructure, quality teachers, and availability of appropriate learning materials. Next, on the list would be residential schools with children from all tribal groups studying together so that they are exposed to diverse languages, culture and knowledge levels, which would subsequently prepare them better to adjust in urban areas during higher studies. Finally, simultaneous vocational courses during their college studies could give them access to
relatively quality education. Therefore, governments should take the ground level cues to channelize the system into a sustainable learning environment for the tribal child. If the process is regulated as per the systematic steps, then it can produce the desired outcomes of quality education in the long run.

| PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR PVTG GIRLS |
|-----------------------------------------------|
| **01** STEP                                   |
| Pre-primary Level                             |
| Make Aganwadis in tribal areas more robust and |
| effective like urban nursery and primary schools. |
|                                               |
| **02** STEP                                   |
| Residential Facilities                        |
| with other ST Students at Upper Primary and    |
| Secondary Levels                              |
| Ashram schools are the best option for the     |
| selected study area. Apart from residential    |
| facilities, girls can mix with other tribal    |
| students. They can get exposure to a certain   |
| rural level diversity.                         |
|                                               |
| **03** STEP                                   |
| Residential Facilities in Urban Locations at   |
| the College Level                              |
| Access to colleges in urban areas with        |
| residential facilities can help them to        |
| explore and experience a more diverse city life. |
| They can get prepared for technical or skill   |
| based trainings to have a smooth entry into    |
| the job sector.                               |
|                                               |
| **04** JOB AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN DEGREE  |
| COLLEGES                                      |
| Strengthening skill based training, technical |
| and computer training can help them to remain  |
| in touch with their career objectives, which  |
| can fetch them a sound livelihood.             |
|                                               |
| **05** STEP                                   |
| THE PROCESS CAN LEAD TO QUALITY EDUCATION      |

Figure 1: Proposed Educational Structure for PVTG Girls Leading to Quality Education

**Source:** Authors’ Representation

**CONCLUSION**

Despite various problems, Odisha has certainly witnessed improvement in school education for the STs. However, often reports claim an improvement in the education statistics and mention it as ‘significant’ or ‘considerable’ but the progress is usually slow and uneven *Kumar and Rustagi* (2010). Undoubtedly, the policies of the state at various levels had an impact but it is not as much as the effort put in place by the organizational structures. The literacy rate among PVTG girls is still critically low, which shows an acute educational deprivation. The significant gaps in the interlinked factors such as the institutional and cultural factors of the community, and that of the state, still sustain. The cultural and institutional factors must be carefully examined to develop institutional frameworks of the state. Such an approach would fill the gap and elicit better results. Persistent problems such as teacher-pupil ratio, ensuring attendance of the teachers, motivating local communities in favor of the girl-child education, and safety and security of the girls must be addressed. Along with this, the inclusion of regional culture, language, storytelling, sports, painting, music, and dance in the curriculum can benefit PVTG girls. Additionally, the teaching of tribal history and culture to both the tribal and non-tribal children can create social cohesion. Education, a social right, is also a safeguard against any exploitation *Chaudhuri and Deutscher* (1993).

The communities and the girls in specific must be educated on the relevance of this very idea in contemporary society. A team of community volunteers from their own community may be trained to motivate parents and elders to send the girl children to schools. In the process, they need to understand the changes in contemporary society, the relevance of education, and the need for participation. Books related to tribal girl-child education can help them better understand the need for education, and instill zeal to study. The ‘Why-Why Girl’ by Mahasweta Devi and ‘Yasmin’s Hammer’ by Ann Malaspina are a few examples of such books. A strong connection between home and school is a prerequisite for spreading girls’ education, which can enable them to perform various roles in life effectively. With proper implementation of all the enablers enumerated in the paper, certainly, the quality education for all would become achievable and no longer remain a
LIMITATION AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This paper has focused solely on the educational issues of PVTG girls, but it can very well be extended to include the PVTG boys. It can also be extended further to include the other nine PVTGs of Odisha. Some of these tribes have worse educational status than the PVTGs under consideration. Other such studies pertaining to varied socio-economic, geographical, administrative, and cultural settings are essential to fully understand the positive effects of the proposed model. Relationship between educational opportunities and religious conversions among the tribes of Odisha and neighboring Jharkhand is another area that can be taken up by future researchers.

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