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Elementary Schools in Koraput District: Issues and Concerns

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Abstract: *The present study is on the status of elementary schools in Koraput-a tribal dominated district of Odisha. To know how far and how near the RTE Act in tribal dominated district of Odisha, the present study was conducted. In the study, the focus was on students' enrolment status, teacher position and profile, Physical facilities in school, Students' learning achievements, Organisation of co-curricular activities, Community Participation, issues relating schools and valuable suggestions of the Head Masters for improving school status. The study was confined in six Blocks and twenty four schools located in tribal dominated Koraput district of Odisha. The self prepared information sheet intending both restricted and open ended responses was used for gathering required data. The paper encompasses the issues associating learning process and suggestive remedies to overcome and address the issues and problems.*

Keywords: *Elementary Schools, Tribal Districts, Physical Facilities, Achievement*

Introduction

Elementary Education is the foundation on which the total super structure of educational fabrics stands on. The strength and quality of secondary and higher education depend on elementary education as it is the threshold or entry point. So it is said "*Well begun is half done*". In short, the quality primary education paves the way for bright and bold destiny of children and side by the destiny of a nation. In this regard, Right to Education Act is a boon and blessing for strengthening elementary educational institutions in India. It is really a constitutional weapon to check or abolish the weaknesses of the system-institutional (school or administrative level), pedagogical-(teaching- learning strategy, evaluation procedure, etc) and policy concerns. Indeed, after implementation of the act, the face and figures of elementary schools throughout the country have been relatively changed.

In Odisha, primary education has been expanding especially in rural and backward areas. The state aims at providing primary schools within 1 Km and upper primary schools within 3 Km of the habitation having population of more than 300 and 500 respectively. In 1947-48, there

were only 6,814 primary schools with 16,520 teachers and 2.55 lakh students in the state. Efforts in eradicating illiteracy in the last five years resulted in setting up 5,267 schools and appointing 9,144 more teachers. During 2013-14, there were 36,399 functional primary schools in the state with 1.21 lakh teachers and 42.78 lakh students. Similarly in 1947-48, there were only 286 upper primary schools with 1,483 teachers and 32,000 enrolments in the state. Due to sustained efforts of the government, the number of upper primary schools increased to 21,945 with 62.57 thousand teachers and 21.10 lakh enrolment by the end of 2013-2014 (Odisha Economic Survey 2014-15). This shows the status of elementary education in terms of enrolment status, number of teachers and schools in the state. But question arises whether the status of elementary education in tribal areas also increased in the same pace? What are the ground realities of elementary education in tribal dominated districts of Odisha especially in terms of the students' enrolment and their learning achievement, position and profile of teachers, infrastructural and physical facilities in schools and cooperation and involvement of parents and community members in the areas? Keeping in view this backdrop and rational, the present study was conducted.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the physical facilities of Elementary Schools in tribal dominated district of Odisha.
2. To study the students' enrolment across the background variables (caste and gender only) in Elementary Schools of Koraput District.
3. To know the teachers' position in Elementary Schools of Koraput District.
4. To study the academic performance of students in Elementary Schools of Koraput District.
5. To identify the major issues and problems of the schools located in tribal dominated district of Odisha.
6. To find out the suggestive remedies from the teachers and Head Masters for holistic development of the schools

Delimitations of the Study

1. The study was conducted on Koraput district, one of the tribal dominated districts of Odisha.
2. The study covered only six blocks and twenty four schools of the district.
3. The samples size was small for broad generalisation

Methodology of the Study

Population and Sample

All the schools of Koraput district (of all 14 Blocks) were considered as population of the study. But due to several reasons, the study was delimited to 6 Blocks and 24 schools only. The samples were purposefully selected. The distribution of sample for the study is enumerated in the following table.

Table 1: Distribution of Samples

Sl.No.	Blocks	No of Schools	Students' Strength of the Schools
1	Nandapur	05	882
2	Dasamantpur	08	568
3	Jeypore	02	285
4	Semiliguda	01	90
5	Boipariguda	04	816
6	Koraput	04	192
Grand Total		24	2833

Data Collection Procedure

The data for the study was collected using self prepared information sheet. The sheet contained eight important areas excluding general profile covering name of the school, location, block, classes up to in school and nature of school-residential or day scholar, etc. The important areas were students' enrolment status, teachers' position and profile, physical facilities in school, students' learning achievements, organisation of co-curricular activities, community participation, issues relating schools and valuable suggestions of the Head Masters for improving school status. The information sheet intended both restricted and unrestricted (open) responses from the Head Masters/Principals. They were given opportunity to respond openly mainly on the issues and problems associating schools and suggestive remedies for betterment of schools. Besides, the suggestions and issues related to elementary education of the district was also collected through open discussion and interaction with teachers, parents and children.

Discussion and Findings

Enrolment Status of Students

Owing to endless efforts in terms of incentives and interventions of SSA, the Gross Enrolment Ratio and Net Enrolment Ration of pupils in Elementary schools has been unexpectedly increased throughout the country. The target of Universal Access/Enrolment has been relatively attained. After implementation of RTE Act since 2010, the enrolment ratio of children 6-14 has remarkably scaled up. Even in tribal, rural and inaccessible areas, the enrolment ratio is also increased. Especially, the provisions of RTE Act and endless attempts of SSA are able to bring the backward children to national mainstream through education which is a good sign in the way of national growth and prosperity. The real enrolment status of children in completely tribal dominated rural schools of Koraput district was stated below (data drawn through the study of sample schools). The target of bridging gender and societal gaps perhaps successfully minimized. The following discussion gives detailed information regarding the enrolment status of children across gender and caste.

Table.2: Enrolment Position of Students during Session 2014-15

Sl. No.	Blocks	No of Schools	No of Students Enrolled							
			Boys				Girls			
			SC	ST	UR	Total	SC	ST	UR	Total
1	Nandapur	05	97	221	181	499	108	129	146	383
2	Dasamantpur	08	50	129	165	344	31	83	110	224
3	Jeypore	02	62	39	30	131	67	42	45	154
4	Semiliguda	01	05	61	07	73	03	14	00	17
5	Boipariguda	04	85	221	140	446	94	150	126	370
6	Koraput	04	22	70	23	115	23	34	20	77
Total		24	321	741	546	1608	326	452	447	1225
Grand Total		24	1608				1225			

Teachers' Position and Profile

The Right to Education Act clearly mentions the rules and responsibilities of teachers along with the criteria of their selection. It is because, the role and importance of teacher is very vital in teaching learning process whatever may be the strategy or pedagogical innovations and approaches. It is open secret that teachers are the stepping stones to lead the students

towards the bright and better futures becoming noble and devoted citizen of the country. For this, their personality, professional qualification and mental status and professionalism of teachers play vital role. In order to know the status of teachers mainly their nature of job, professional qualification and teaching experience, the teachers were asked some information. Accordingly, the following table was on teachers prepared.

Table 3: Teachers' Position and Profile

Sl No	Blocks	Nature of Service		Professional Training		Teaching Experience		
		Regular	Temporary	Trained	Untrained	Upto 5	6-10	11-30
1	Nandapur	17	13	22	08	08	06	16
2	Dasamantpur	22	04	22	04	02	11	13
3	Jeypore	14	00	14	00	00	00	14
4	Semiliguda	03	01	04	00	01	01	02
5	Boipariguda	16	07	21	02	04	10	09
6	Koraput	08	10	13	05	10	00	08
Total		80	35	96	19	25	28	62
Grand Total		115		115		115		

According to the above table, there were 115 teachers working in 24 sample schools for 2833 students. But it is the holistic calculation. Accordingly one teacher is working for 24 students. But if it is calculated school wise, the result will be different. It was seen in one school, only one teacher was working (single teacher school). Similarly, out of 115, 83% teachers were trained and rest were untrained. On the other hand, 30% teachers were contractual teachers working on consolidated pay. But most of the teachers in these schools were experienced enough. Most of teachers have degree (+3) with Diploma in teacher education (CT/DEIEd) as professional training. Besides, some teachers completed Post Graduation with BEd degree. Overall, the status of teachers in these schools is relatively satisfactory.

Infrastructural Facilities

Better infrastructural facilities are the assets of a school not only for promoting quality education but also to chalk out several prospective plans and programmes for welfare of the learners and school as a whole. In this regard, the information drawn from the teachers and Head Masters on physical facilities like classrooms available and requirement, separate office room, HM chamber, staff common room, staff quarters, drinking water facilities, boundary wall, toilet facilities, separate kitchen, play ground, library, laboratory, first aid box and other facilities available in schools and basic requirements. According to the study, 75% schools have no adequate number of classrooms. It means at least one classroom is also not available for one standard/class. The students of more than one /two classes are sitting in a room which not only makes noise but also hampers the learning process. Similarly, around 50% schools have separate office and Head Master chambers and rest 50% have no such facilities. It is seen in 80% schools have no separate staff common room and no school have residential facilities for teachers (quarter facilities). The study reveals all most all schools except four have drinking water facilities. In 18 schools, the school staff and students use tube well water and in two schools bore well water used for drinking and cooking of mid day meals. On the other hand, 58% schools have no boundary walls, 13% schools have boundary wall but are manageable and rest schools have strong and safe boundary walls. Similarly, 66% schools have toilets but not adequate numbers. It means most of schools only one or two toilets for both staff and students which is insufficient and not hygienic for use. It is also very difficult

to maintain as no better facility for supply water, most of teachers said the student casually use toilets. They prefer open place for toilet purpose. According to the survey, 90% schools have separate kitchen but no school possess separate dining hall for dining mid day meal. About 83% schools have no play ground for the students while 17% have play ground. The study says 67% schools have library but 33% don not have. But the number of books in all most all school libraries is between 150 and 300 only. The students do not use the libraries regularly according to the data. Besides, no school have science laboratories but all most all schools have Teaching Learning Corners and facilities of First Aid Boxes for emergency.

Students' Academic Performance

Analysing the information given by the schools regarding the performances of children for last three years (from 2011-12 to 2014-15), it revealed that the learning achievement of children in these schools were not satisfactory. Around 50% students were low achievers whose score in last examinations was below 30%. Rest 50% students scored between 41% and 70% in last academic years. The teachers opined most of students in the schools were first generation learners. On the other hands, most of parents were daily labourers and unskilled workers. They cannot give time for their children's' learning. Irregularity of students in schools is also an important factor responsible for low learning achievement of students. Besides teachers' crunch is also a factor adversely impacts on students' learning.

Organisation of co-curricular activities;

Responding the question on organisation of co-curricular activities in schools for holistic development of children in other aspects with cognitive development, the teachers said besides classroom activities and teaching concerning scholastic areas or completing syllabi, other activities were also organised. The activities were sports and games, exhibition, dance, music, marshal art/ karate for self defence mainly to girls in KGBVs, drawing, painting, vocational training like training, candle preparation, toy making, using waste papers, etc. Most of Head Masters in their report said these activities in schools help the students to participate in district and state level competitions and programmes organised by government and some non government organisation from time to time.

Community Participation

Community participation and parental involvement are important aspects for learning achievement and institutional growth of the schools. To know the views of the Head Masters, a question was asked how do parents, SCM, PTA, MTA and PRI members support your for smooth functioning of schools and providing quality education to the learners. They were given three options- they are cooperative/ non-cooperative and manageable. Responding this, 80% Head Masters said the parents are cooperative. They again said they are cooperative in the sense most of them never like to interfere in school matters and students performance due to their ignorance or lack of time. But most of them like to send their wards to school. Similarly, 60% teachers said the SMC members are cooperative while 40% said they are non-cooperative and intervening unnecessarily in the activities of the schools. Besides, they gave their mixed response regarding the roles of PTA, MTA and PRIs. Above all, the role of parents and community members are comparable with that of educated and sensitive parents or SMC members.

Issues, Suggestions and Recommendations

The Head Masters, teachers, SMC members, students and some parents raised some serious issues associating schools. They also suggested some remedies to address the issues and promote quality education to the learners. The issues, suggestions and recommendations

associating smooth functioning of schools and improving learning achievements of the learners enumerated below.

1. Adequate number of classrooms for each school should be constructed. At least one room for one class and one multipurpose hall for organising several scholastic and co-scholastic programmes and activities should be constructed in each school.
2. For providing residential facilities to teachers nearby school especially in the remotest villages, staff quarters with all facilities should be provided. This will help the teachers to devote more time to their schools and students.
3. Safe boundary wall in each school is highly needed not only for safety and security of the students and staff but also to beautify the schools. This will help to make beautiful flower garden, kitchen garden and botanical garden.
4. For better hygiene and healthy cooking of mid day meals, separate but permanent kitchen shed and dining hall should be constructed in the schools.
5. Adequate number of toilets for boys, girls and staff with water facilities may be taken into serious concern in all schools. This will pave the way to work out Swachh Bharat Abhiyan on ground level.
6. Pure drinking water facilities should be made in schools to save children from contaminated diseases.
7. Sufficient play materials and play ground should be provided to all schools.
8. To boost up the scientific temper in the learners sufficient science equipments should be supplied to each school.
9. Well equipped library with need based study materials, reference books and learning material should be set up in all schools.
10. Adequate number of trained teachers as per RTE norm should be appointed for better learning achievement of the learners.
11. Regular educational feedback and awareness should be provided to parents, community members and SMC members to increase the regular attendance of students in schools.
12. Regular medical check up of the learners with awareness of parents regarding health and hygiene, nutrition, several diseases may be done through health camps.
13. Better physical and learning facilities should be made for CWSNs in all schools for bringing equity and equality among children through inclusive education.
14. Electrification with computer supply must be done to all schools to lead the revolution of digital India.
15. Regular and effective monitoring and supervision by both academic and administrative authorities should be highly needed for smooth working of the schools. This will give academic feedback and administrative support to teachers and staff. This also able to bridge the gap between school and administration.

Conclusions

To conclude, several reports and surveys like ASER and others are the pointers regarding degradation of quality in elementary schools of rural and tribal India. The gloomy learning achievements of the students in several subjects are great challenge to the policy makers, administrators, teachers and parents. Particularly precarious conditions of government school

children in terms of their learning achievements more specifically in rural and tribal dominated areas is really compelling to rethink on education of these children of these areas. So a serious concern should be made with providing all infrastructural facilities to strengthen elementary education of rural and tribal children. Besides, the parents to be ensured to provide quality education to their children like so called private managed schools.

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