Educational Achievement in Tribal Area through PPP: A Case Study of Odisha

Janmejay Sahu

Introduction

Education is most effective tool for human beings to understand the society in the right perspective and live accordingly. Further, Right to Education has arguably empowered the people and enabled their children to pursue compulsory basic elementary education as part of their fundamental right. Lack of education renders people ignorant about the society and its many dimension thus making it difficult for them to set priorities and make appropriate life choices. Tribes or indigenous people live in and around the forests or hilly tracts where development process reaches very late. The inaccessibility to the tribal habitations makes it very difficult for the administration to provide basic education to the tribal children as teachers either refuse to go there or adopt dubious means to avoid duties however they used to take salary. However, in view of this institutional discrepancy and denial of basic entitlement several NGOs, private agencies and sensitized groups decided to lend a helping hand to the local Primary Schools in the tribal areas of Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts that have substantial tribal population.

This paper argues how the collaboration of the government schools with the private organizations will result in maximum enrolment of tribal children in the schools and it will create a hope among the tribals about the future of tribal children. Therefore, this paper tries to present a detailed and analytical account of the PPP collaboration towards the educational achievement of the tribes in Odisha.

A Conceptual Understanding: PPP in Education

The Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) is the new face of development where the state and private actors, who have had a long history of conflict now work in collaboration, and cooperate with each other to further common goals of a market driven, growth-oriented agenda. State actors “enter into partnerships with organisations in civil society, the market, and with transnational organisations, to affect the governance of globalisation. The fanning out of the state, the spanning out of the state, the privatisation of state and para-state institutions, and the subcontracting of state functions, is what governance is about” (Chandhoke 2003). However, the approach to PPPs must remain firmly grounded in principles which ensure that PPPs are formulated and executed in public interest with a view to achieving additional capacity and delivery of public services at reasonable cost. These partnerships must ensure the supplementing of scarce public resources for investment in infrastructure sectors, while improving efficiencies and reducing costs…
Public private partnerships must aim at bringing private resources into public projects, not public resources into private projects (GoI 2007: 256). According to Shaol, partnerships are “policies that enrich the few at the expense of the majority and for which no democratic mandate can be secured” (Shaol in Hodge and Greve 2005: 550).

According to Kingdon (2007), the system of government grant-in-aid to privately managed schools at the secondary and higher levels accounts for a very substantial proportion of the education budget. Public-Private Partnership in school education is projected as a strategy to distribute the ownership of institutions, rather than tasks within institutions, between private entrepreneurs and NGOS on the one hand, and the government or state on the other. While the rationale for PPP is inefficiency of the government, the means offered to overcome it actually promise no relief or improvement. PPP is not an idea, but rather an ideology which promotes privatisation as a means of reducing the government’s responsibility to increase the number of schools. (Kumar Krishna, 2008).

Further, it shows that community participation in improving education is negligible and that members of the SEMCs have limited awareness of the SSA (Rao, V.S, 2009). According to Aggarwal (2000), the elementary education system shows the signs of a dual system where public schools are meant for the poor, who are unable to pay for quality education, characterised widely by teacher absenteeism and private schools cater to the requirements for quality education involving high user costs.

Further, it was uncritically assumed that education could cure all kinds of social problems and particularly that it could bring about more equality among men. As the sociology of education developed, this was progressively reversed and a new philosophy, a pessimistic one, emerged more and more convincingly. It may be summarised in the statement that schooling is unable to reduce to any considerable extent the inequalities among individuals which result from social background (Raymond Boudon, 1974). Moreover, the tribal people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of those actions. Empowering tribal people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which tribal people can act on their own behalf rather than at the directions of others. Education is the basis to empower the tribal people who are out of the school in various tribal communities. However, lack of facilities to include the tribal children in the school education in tribal area of the country is a main concern to the process of tribal empowerment through education.

Methodology and Limitations

The methodology for this study is descriptive in nature. It is based on a qualitative research that includes observation method, document analysis; and in-depth personal interviews. The data are collected from both the sources i.e. primary as well as the secondary sources to generate a comprehensive idea to the problem of this study. Limited availability of time and cost are the major limitations of this study and very specific to a small area of study.

Education Scenario of Odisha

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 is a Central Govt. Act which came into force from 1st April 2010. According to RTE Act, it is mandatory on the part of government to ensure 8 years of elementary education to all children in the age
group of 6-14 years. The RTE calls for a paradigm shift in the educational provisioning and processes which till now worked like service providers. The Act interprets it as the responsibility of duty bearers and stakeholders to remain accountable for provisioning the schools for all children and completion of 8 years of elementary level schooling by all children across the State. This means addressing the core issues such as, poor infrastructure, inadequate teaching and learning materials, poor water and toilet facilities, etc. to ensure continuation of elementary education by the children.

Moreover, according to census 2001, Odisha has a population of 3,67,06,920. The population in the age group of 0 to 6 is 51,80,551. The number of literates is 2,05,53,786. The literacy rate of persons of seven years age and above is 63.61%. The age of seven and above is taken for this purpose because children below seven years of age are not expected to learn alphabets. Male literacy is 75.95% and female literacy is 50.97%. According to the data available by Ministry of School and Mass Education, Govt. of Odisha, 66 lakh children of 6 to 14 years age group are in-school, out of which 12 lakh are SCs and 17 lakh are STs. 1.87 lakh children of 6 to 14 years age group are out-of-school from which 0.3 lakh are from SC and 0.9 lakh are from ST community. Out of them 56,995 Children were admitted to regular existing and New Schools under Enrolment Drive in districts. Though the Government of Odisha has been making significant progress in school education in terms of enrolment of children in schools, concern on the poor quality of education and high drop out of ST and SC students, girls and children belonging to other marginalized group still remains to be addressed. There are substantial social, regional and gender disparities in literacy. However, there are an estimated 2.7 lakhs children who are out of school (not enrolled or dropped out from schools) and, even as efforts are being made to bring them to school, the need for additional resources has been growing rapidly. The system faces shortage of resources, schools, classrooms and teachers. There are also concerns relating to teachers training, the quality of the curriculum, assessment of learning achievements and the efficacy of school management. Given the scarcity of quality schools, many children drop out before completing five years of primary education; many of those who stay on learn little.

**Educational Initiatives for Tribal Children in Odisha**

The Scheduled Tribes communities have very low levels of literacy. The ST female literacy has increased from a very low level of 4.76 percent in 1981 to 23.23 percent in 2001, which is significantly lower than SC and general female literacy. Though the ST male literacy has increased from 23.27 percent in 1981 to 51.48 percent in 2001, there is still a big gap between that and the general male literacy. (Economic Survey, 2011-12)

The system of Multi Lingual Education (MLE) covers 8 districts with 10 tribal languages including 02 primitive languages (Juarga & Bonda). It is planned to add 10 more tribal languages during 2010-11 covering another five districts. Textbooks are distributed to 19,786 enrolled children. Multi Language Education is now operationalised in 544 schools. Ministry of Human Resources Development has initiated a study through National Council of Educational Research and Training and Multi Language Education, Orissa for its innovativeness.

**Srjuan**, a community based child centered retention drive was taken up in 180 Blocks covering 2064 CRCs of 30 districts. Around 16 lakh children have been covered.
through this Programme. Its aim is to create linkage between community and school and strengthen their bond. More than one lakh stories have been collected by the children from the community through story telling festivals. Efforts have been made to create innovation like *Rupantar* as a teacher training module is used in tribal areas to train both tribal and non-tribal teachers on tribal pedagogy (in 141 blocks). Also, to strengthen the community relation with the schools in tribal area initiatives have been taken that has achieved to make Village Education Committee (VECs) in place in all Primary and Upper Primary schools; to encourage the Village Education Committees to participate in Civil Works, Micro Planning and School Mapping and developing School Environment and Supply of uniforms and also formation of School Management Committee (SMC) at elementary level is in progress.

**Brief Account of PPP in Odisha Education**

As per the School Support System of Government of Odisha, it aims to convert backward rural and urban Government and Government aided schools into quality schools (Sundar Vidyalayas) in 2-3 years of time so that they are to par with the best run schools in terms of infrastructure and performance. The key objectives of this scheme are (i) to mobilize community support and other resources to address issues of provisioning access to quality education, (ii) to make an appeal to the ‘partners in progress’ to support schools to contribute in kind towards infrastructure, school provisions and facilities for children and teachers, (iii) to seek the help of local community to improve the academic performance of the schools. Also, it provides abundant scope to the ‘Partners in Progress’ to contribute in kind in the interest of education in the state which includes Corporate houses, Elected representatives, Academicians/academic institutions, Individual donors, Voluntary/socially-committed organizations, Industrial Establishments, Public Sector Undertakings, Banks and Financial Institutions, Associations of Trade and Industry, Media Groups and other interested groups/organizations/individuals who can contribute time and attention for improvement of enrolment, retention and achievement in the school, homemakers etc.

However, as per the scheme, the partner can choose to take up any one or any number of activities such as (i) Provision of water and toilet facilities to the schools separately for boys and girls; (ii) Construction and renovation of existing buildings; (iii) Provision for developing school garden, fencing or compound wall; (iv) Provision of equipment and furniture; (v) Provision of utensils for mid-day meals; (vi) Providing computers for the students; (vii) Building or strengthening of laboratory and library; (viii) Developing of playground/provision of play materials; (ix) Sponsoring literary and scientific activities in the schools; (x) Providing aid and appliances for children with special need; (xi) Helping raise kitchen garden with specific focus on papaya and drumsticks and (xii) Improvement in hostel infrastructure.

**Case Studies in Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts**

A rigorous field visit was made to understand the functioning of the schools in the tribal area and the role of the private organisations for school education for tribal children in three various levels of the schools in two gram panchayats such as Kadalkala and Patmunda of Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts in Odisha respectively. The area for this study was chosen purposefully as this area covers maximum iron ore and most of the private mining companies are working in that area. The selected area of this
study covers Schools of Uppar Kadakala Village, Kriakudar and Kadalia villages of two gram Panchayats those are situated in and around 5 kilometres distance of each other in the mountain and vast forest area. People living in that area have been facing various problems in term of road transport, telecommunication, availability of electricity and adequate facilities for drinking water and at the same time, this area has a vast stock of natural resources such as iron ore, manganese ore and other minerals which has been adding huge tax to the state government treasures. However, most of the schools running in that area have been facing various problems such as inadequate number of teachers, government facilities as well as most of the government teachers are not interested to come to these schools due to lack of communication facilities and as it is in the hilly forest area.

Case-1: Uppar Kadakala UGUP School of Kadakala Gram Panchayat, Bansapal Block of Keonjhar District

Uppar Kadakala UDUP School is situated in the village Uppar Kadakala of the Kadakala Gram Panchayat of Bansapal Block in Keonjhar district. Uppar Kadakala is a village with two hamlets such as Uppar Kadakala Mundasahi and Uppar Kadakala Naiksahi where most of its population are tribals. This village location is on the top of the hilly area of Bansapal Gram Panchayat. This village is at a very separate location from the Kadakala Panchayat in which peripherial area are mining areas controlled by various mining owners or companies. This school covers from 1st standard to 8th standard with about 300 students that require minimum eight government teachers. However, there are only two government teachers available to run the school. Out of two government teachers, one is tribal government teacher as the category of the students is both tribal and non-tribal students. As the number of students is increasing and there are students upto 8th standard, it is a problem to run the school smoothly.

Keeping the above problem as well as the Odisha Government’s scope for Public Private Partnership in School education as per School Support System, private organization have given their supporting hands to this school’s improvement namely Odisha Sponge Iron Ltd(OSL) and Mesco Orissa Sponge Iron Ltd have been helping financially i.e the salary of 3 contract teachers @ Rs.2500.00 per month through the government proper channel whereas Mesco has been helping financially i.e. the salary of 2 contract teachers. By personal interview with Mr. Prakash Ghana one of the five contract teachers of the school, it is understood that now the functioning of school is good and regular classes are being taken to cover all the classes for both tribal and non-tribal children of that village. He also said that out of five contract teachers, there are two more tribal teachers engaged to handle the tribal children. He said, there are seven teacher including two government teachers where three teachers from the tribal community are engaged to understand the problems of the tribal children and lead them in the process of schooling education. He shared that their initiatives are being taken to include more tribal children in the school as most of the tribal children not coming are still to school engaged with various activities such as collecting wood from the jungle, helping their parents in agricultural works.

Case-2: Kriakudar Primary Project School, Patmunda Gram Panchayat of Koira Block of Sundargarh District

Kriakudar is a village with a tribal hamlet of the Patmunda Gram Panchayat of Koira Block
of the Sundragarh district. It is located in the hilly jungle area. The population of that village including the tribal hamlet covers around 350. This village is having a school called government Kriakudar Project School that includes upto 5th standard for both tribal and non-tribal students with having around 74 students including 74 male and 50 female students of all five classes. However, only one lady government teacher was in the school to run whole 5 class students which is supposed to have five teachers to function the school effectively. The language problem is another concern to teach the tribal children. However, most of the tribal children do not come to the school as there is lack of awareness among the tribal children and the tribal community.

To bring the school in an order, a good initiative is taken with the help of the local private organizations. Through the School Support System of Odisha Government, Nilanchal, one of the local mining companies has extended its hand to support this school and the community. This company has been providing the salary @ Rs.2000.00 to one lady contract teacher through the government process. During field visit and personal interview with the lone lady contract teacher of the School Smt. Jyotsnarani Barik, she informed that there were only 50 students for all five classes before her joining in the school. However, the enrolment is increased after her joining from 50 to 74 as a result that she is very young and from the community itself who visits each house of the village and hamlet to convince the people about the education and it importance to the children as well as the community. She also told that eventhough the strength of the students i.e.74 for 5 classes is very low, it is difficult to teach all of them and care them as most of them are from the tribal community who need special attention for their education. Interestingly she said that she has been engaging all the students to create interests of the tribal students in school education and to come regularly to the school. However, he opined that it is need of the hour for government to engage more teachers in the school for its smooth functioning.

Case-3: Kadalia Uppar Primary School, Patmunda Gram Panchayat of Koira Block of Sundargarh District

Kadalia is a village with a tribal hamlet having the population around 400. The location of the villages in the hilly area of Patmunda Gram Panchayat of Koira Block of Sundargarh district in Odisha. The tribal hamlet of this village is situated in the down side of the village and the mountains surround it. This village has an Upper Primary School, called Kadalia Upper Primary School. This School has capacity up to 7th standard. Both the tribal and non-tribal students come to the School to have education from both the tribal hamlet and Kadalia villages including the 6th and 7th standard students from its peripheral areas such as Kriakudar. Around 160 students are studying in all classes in this School. As per the capacity of this School, it should have 8 teachers to run all 7 classes. However, only two government teachers were managing the school to handle all the students of 7 classes that was not adequate to run the school. Seeing this concern, government functionaries tried to solve it by engaging the private organization, such as Neelanchal Mining Company who is active in the work in this peripheral area of this village. This Company has been providing financial help to this school by engaging one contract teacher from this village @ Rs.2000.00 per month through proper government process.

Mr. Bipin Munda, a tribal youth of the village who is engaged as contract teacher in Kadalia Upper Primary School said during a personal interview that now, there are three
teachers working in this school including two government school and one contract teacher. All the classes have been functioning even though there is lack of teachers’ availability. He further, expressed that a few tribal children are coming to the school regularly as most of the tribal children are being engaged with various works. He said that as he is a tribal boy from the community, more tribal children are coming to school and at the same time, he also uses tribal local language to make understand the tribal students. At the end, he told that as this village in very hilly area and no adequate teachers, it is very difficult to manage students all the 7 classes and hoped that government should solve this problem by providing more teachers to the school with adequate facilities to empower the tribal students.

Major Findings

The literature has shown that there is a need of the public private partnership in education to improve the educational facilities and strengthen the educational institutions with community participation towards betterment of the children’s education. Further, School Support System of the Ministry of School and Mass Education, Government of Odisha has engaged private organisations in the improvement of school education. However, lack of the developmental activities and facilities in the tribal areas of Odisha particularly in the mining tribal belt of Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts has again initiated the necessity of PPP in education.

From the field study in three schools of the Keonjhar and Sundargarh district in Odisha, it is revealed that most of the tribal children are deprived of school education in the area of the study due to inadequate government teacher’s availability in those schools. This also shows that even though this tribal area is full of natural resources, they are yet to be connected in the mainstream of the development process. This study establishes the fact that available private organisation in the tribal area and their association with educational institutions has resulted in increasing the tribal children’s enrolment and their regular attendance in the Schools. This study demonstrates that due to PPP in education, most of the community people are engaged in the school to educate the tribal children who are from the same communities. Moreover, this study again explains that most of the contract teachers have been taking initiative to aware the tribal community for sending their children to the schools. During field visit, it is observed that the tribal people in the community are happy with PPP in education sphere which is enhancing their children’s education. Therefore, all these findings of the study are the basis that directs towards the real empowerment of the tribals through education.

Specific Suggestions

From this study conducted in both tribal areas of Keonjhar and Sundragarh districts of Odisha, the following suggestions are made for betterment of education in tribal areas viz; i) necessary arrangement should be made at government level to provide basic facilities in the schools, ii) the government should appoint more teachers to meet the lack of government teachers in those schools, iii) the government should encourage more participation of private organisations in terms of strengthening government school’s infrastructure as well its quality education, iv) Initiative to increase salary of the contract teachers sponsored/supported by the private organisation is need of hour that will be beneficial for their livelihood, v) innovative approaches should be initiated to include more tribal children in school education, and vi) adequate tribal teachers should be appointed to teach the tribal
people in tribal language as well as government should initiate steps to prepare texts in tribal language which will be easily accessible by the tribal children.

**Conclusion**

Educating the tribal children and empowering them is a challenge which can be achieved by collective effort of all the stakeholders of the society such as village community, private organisations, teachers, government functionaries, elected representatives and the people in general. This study reveals that it is essential to involve the community and private, corporate organisations in the educational achievement in the tribal areas where most of the educational institutions are facing various challenges. Moreover, it is observed that the local community are supportive to send their children to the schools. However, inadequate facilities and lack of initiatives towards making tribal community are grave concerns. This study again says that due to PPP, both the teachers from the community and the children from the community are getting benefited which is a good signal for decentralisation process of education. Also, it is a sign of empowering the community as well as the children of the community. Therefore, government should prepare innovative approaches to involve the entire stakeholders at various levels for streamlining the educational system, so as to achieve higher literacy level among the tribal children in the long run.

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Janmejay Sahu, Ph.D Scholar, Department of Political Science, Central University of Hyderabad, janmejaysahu23@gmail.com