

Perceptions of Young Teachers about the Issues Associated with Bringing out Model Schools in Tribal Areas

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Abstract

Koraput, a tribal dominated district, is one of the educationally backward districts in Odisha. The literacy rate of the district is far below the state and national average, and the dropout rate at schools is also higher than national level. To protect the interests of tribal children, both central and state governments have launched several schemes and projects for the educational upliftment of the people in the district but the actual socio-economic parameters present a gloomy picture. Recognising the significance of model teachers and schools in quality education, the present study intends to know the perceptions of the newly appointed young teachers of Koraput district about their schools and students. The study specially emphasises on identifying the issues and problems associated with the schools which restrict the teachers to make their schools model schools. Besides, the investigator tries to know the suggestive measures from the teachers directly in order to provide quality education to tribal children by making their schools as model, ideal, exemplary.

INTRODUCTION

Every good teacher likes to work in a model school. A model school refers to a school in a congenial environment

with necessary infrastructural facilities, dedicated, competent and trained teachers, active and supportive non-teaching staff, ideal

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students, active involvement of community members, exemplary performance of pupils in scholastic and co-scholastic areas, etc. But who can make a school an ideal? The answer is the teachers with the co-operation of administration, community and supportive staff. It is seen that the young generation of today, particularly the gifted students, do not like to opt teaching as their profession. Rather the average students show more interest in teaching profession. So it is the responsibility of the administration to train and make them more competent and dedicated. In this view, the School and Mass Education Department of Odisha Government organise pre-service and in-service trainings, workshops, etc. through Teacher Training Institutes (DIETs, CTEs, IASEs, B.Ed. Colleges, etc.). During the in-service training programme to the untrained teachers (Shiksha Sahayakas and Gana Shikshakas) at DIET, Koraput, Odisha, a workshop was organised to know the vision of the young untrained teachers working in the tribal dominated Koraput district of Odisha. The paper is based on the output of the workshop and it tries to answer the following questions:

What are the perceptions of the young teachers about a model school?

What are the issues and problems associated with bringing out model schools in tribal dominated areas?

What suggestive measures to be taken to make the schools model in tribal dominated areas?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of the study were:

1. To study the perception of the young teachers about a model school.
2. To enlist the views of the teachers towards the basic ingredients of a model school.
3. To identify the issues and problems associated with their working schools in order to make them model schools in tribal dominated areas.
4. To find out remedial measures from the teachers in making their schools model for others.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

120 untrained young teachers from different elementary schools of 12 blocks of Koraput district were selected as samples of the study. The cluster sampling technique was used for selecting samples. The age-group of the teachers (samples) of different social categories ranges from 20 to 40 years. The sample status of the study is stated in the following table:

Key Terms Defined

The following key terms in the study are felt necessary to be defined:

Young Untrained Teachers

The study was conducted among newly appointed untrained teachers in elementary schools in different blocks of tribal dominated district of Koraput in Odisha. The teachers

Distribution of Samples

Sl. No.	Blocks	Gender		Educational Qualification		Age	
		Male	Female	+2	Graduation	Below 25	From 25 to 40
1	Lamtaput	13	7	15	5	6	14
2	Semiliguda	6	7	10	13	8	5
3	Laxmipur	10	6	12	4	6	10
4	N.Patana	5	6	8	3	8	3
5	Bandhugam	4	3	4	3	4	3
6	Nandpur	3	5	1	7	6	2
7	Potangi	4	4	3	5	5	3
8	Koraput	2	2	2	2	4	0
9	Borriguma	4	3	4	3	4	3
10	Kotpad	4	3	6	1	2	5
11	Dasmantpur	8	3	8	3	4	7
12	Boipariguda	6	2	5	3	1	7
Total	12	69	51	78	42	58	62
Grand Total	12	120		120		120	

belonged to 25-40 years age-group. Those teachers with teaching experience or in service as teacher between 1 to 5 years were considered as young teachers.

Model School

The schools in congenial study atmosphere having all facilities for providing quality education are called model schools. The young teachers were asked to give a perception of model school which will be able to provide quality education to the children for all-round development.

Collection of Data

The data for the present study were collected through a workshop during an in-service training programme

to the untrained teachers in DIET, Koraput at Jeypore of Odisha. The workshop, organised in two phases at the conference hall of DIET, was on the perceptions of the untrained young teachers towards (n) model / ideal school. In the first phase, there were 58 teachers and in the second phase 62 teachers participated. The data were collected through open group discussion under the guidance and co-ordination of investigator. For the discussion, the teachers were divided into three groups, viz. 1st group — the male teachers of below 25 years, 2nd group — the male teachers above the 25 years and the 3rd group consisted of only lady teachers (most of them below 25 years). Before the group discussion,

the teachers were instructed to write their individual opinion in blank papers regarding the definition and basic ingredients of model school, the major constraints in their schools to become model schools and sought suggestions of how to convert their schools into model schools.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Objectives 1 and 2: Perceptions of the young untrained teachers about model school

Youths are the future of every nation. Their vision and dedication makes a nation progress. To know the expectations and vision of the young untrained teachers towards their schools, a question was asked regarding the definition and basic features of a model school. The opinions of the teachers are stated below:

- A model school should be located in safe and pollution-free environment.
- A model school should have adequate infrastructural facilities, including well-equipped classrooms, office room, common staff room, TLM corner, study centre, separate Headmaster's chamber, resource room, well-equipped and updated library, laboratories (for all disciplines), separate kitchen for mid-day meal preparation, residential facilities for teachers and staff (quarters), multi-purpose hall (for conferences, dance, music,

drama, literary completions, school cabinet, Meena Mancha, etc.), playground, sports room with adequate play and sports materials, first aid box, etc., idea box, dust bins, drinking water facilities, separate toilets and urinals for staff, boys and girls, strong and safe boundary wall, well-maintained gardens (kitchen, botanical, geometrical and mathematical, flower garden), etc.

- Classrooms in the model school should be well-equipped with effective sitting arrangements, ventilation, proper lightings, attractive black board, achievement board, work board, board for picture and writings on the classroom walls, etc.
- A model school should have adequate trained, dedicated and devoted teachers as per Student Teacher Ratio of Right to Education Act, 2009. The teachers should be updated, oriented and trained from time-to-time with innovations in pedagogy, curriculum, evaluation and emerging trends and issues.
- Most of the teachers strongly stated that library and laboratories are the two eyes of a model school. Thus, the libraries should be well adorned with adequate number of textbooks, reference materials, supplementary study materials (story books, novels, dramas, poetry, etc.), dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc. Similarly, the laboratories also should be well

equipped and updated. These will assist the learners to broaden their scientific outlook and sensitise them in different aspects.

- The teachers think autonomy to teachers can only make a school model, ideal and exemplary for others. So the school administration should provide complete freedom to the teachers to improvise the study materials, teaching aids, tools and techniques for effective evaluation on the basis of the needs and nature of the learners.
- The teachers categorically emphasised that a model school should have better sanitary facilities. The school campus should be neat and clean with adequate safe drinking water, separate urinals and toilets for all (i.e., staff, boys and girls).
- A model school should share a good rapport with the community through regular interaction with Parent-Teacher Association, Mother-Teacher Association, School Managing Committee, and home visit of teachers, participation in different events of village or locality where the school is situated.
- A model school is not only meant for holistic progress of the learners through quality education but also for social welfare, social harmony and social awareness.
- Besides the curricular activities, a model school should organise multi-dimensional activities to

identify and draw out the hidden qualities of the learners.

- Inclusive growth should be the main goal of a model school. It should provide equal opportunities to all pupils for progress and prosperity, including the differently-abled (physically and mentally challenged) children and those belonging to weaker sections of society.

Objective 3: Problems and issues in the working schools that hinder in making model schools

Being the practitioners of different schools, the in-service teachers spelt out several issues and concerns in their schools which stand in the way of making their schools model or ideal schools. They are as follows:

- The teachers stated that the schools in tribal dominated Koraput district of Odisha are not located in suitable places. Inaccessibility and lack of effective communication facilities are the major challenges facing the teachers. On the other hand, non-availability of residential facilities, neither government quarters nor rented houses, to stay nearby schools in remote areas adds more problems for the teachers and school staff. Thus, these problems adversely affect the education quality to a considerable extent as the teachers fail to devote more time (other than school hours) for betterment of their schools and students.

- Lack of required subject teachers (mainly for teaching Science and English) and inadequate Student Teacher Ratio are the major concerns in rural and tribal areas. They said most of the schools are run by single teacher.
- Lack of necessary infrastructural facilities is another major problem in the schools of the district. In most of the schools there is no separate classroom for each class, separate office room, safe drinking water facility, functional well-equipped library and laboratory, strong retaining wall, etc are available.
- Linguistic problem is the prominent issue in the schools of tribal dominated areas. The tribal children fail to understand clearly the Odia language used by the teachers as they frequently use their local language at home and also with peers. Similarly, the teachers are also not competent enough to understand the languages used by the students. So the communication gap remains the main problem in making teaching learning process qualitative and fruitful.
- Owing to illiteracy, ignorance, poor financial background and non-cooperation of the parents, the students do not come to school regularly. Most of the time, the school-going children instead of attending school devote more time to parental profession or take care of their younger siblings. Hence, poor attendance in schools is a major issue in tribal areas. Even after lunch, no child is interested to stay at schools.
- Non-availability of regular full time headmasters poses a major problem in managing the schools effectively. The teachers opined most of the schools in remote areas are managed by inexperienced *Shiksha Sahayakas* (temporary or contractual teachers). So how can professionally inexperienced and immature teachers make model schools?
- The teachers raised an issue that the teachers are unnecessarily engaged in other activities like management of mid-day meal scheme, construction of school buildings, survey works, etc. Such type of engagement in non-academic activities not only wastes the teaching hours but also makes teachers overburdened.
- The young teachers said the autonomy to teachers in organising academic activities can only make the teaching qualitative and effective. But the teachers are put to a lot of stress due to administrative and political interventions.
- The matters of financial insecurity also leave the teachers disturbed. They stated the step-motherly attitude of the administrative authorities to solve the basic problems of the teachers, sometimes seriously impacting

the professional competency of the teachers.

- The teachers are of the opinion that though they are the actual practitioners in schools, they are not engaged while developing curriculum or in pedagogical innovations.
- Faulty transfer and promotion policy sometimes creates discontentment among teachers.
- Besides, dropout is also a major issue in elementary schools in tribal areas.

Objective 4: Suggestions of the teachers to make their schools model schools

The teachers in tribal areas do not find it difficult to make their schools model schools, if the following suggestions are taken into consideration. These are:

- Provide all infrastructural facilities needed to make the schools model schools. The facilities like well-equipped classrooms, office room, headmaster's chamber, common staff room, resource centre, TLM corner, study corner, multi-purpose hall, kitchen, sanitary facilities, urinals and toilets, usable library and laboratory, staff quarters, effective teaching aids, etc. should be provided to each school for holistic development of children through quality education.
- Regular and experienced headmasters with administrative competency and managerial skills may be appointed in schools.

- Adequate number of trained teachers with subject experts may be appointed in schools as per RTE norm.
- The untrained teachers should be given adequate training. Besides, regular orientation and workshops for capacity building of the teachers should be organised. It can also update them with emerging pedagogical innovations.
- Strict supervisory team should monitor the school activities and collect feedback from the teachers also on regular basis. This will also help bridge the gap between school authorities and the teachers.
- Being the district educational hub, the teacher education institutes (DIETs, CTEs, IASEs, B.Ed. colleges, etc.) should always be ready to provide all sorts of academic support to the schools.
- The study materials (reading and writing materials, uniforms, etc.) of the students should be supplied at the beginning of the academic year so that students can make optimal use of it.
- Residential facilities (quarters) to the teachers should be provided in inaccessible areas so that they can devote more time in schools as well as on students.
- Teachers' autonomy is highly essential to make competitive study atmosphere in the schools. They should not be pressured to follow prescribed format or method

during teaching, evaluation and other activities.

- The teachers should not be made to involve in administrative work like operating mid-day meal programme, conducting surveys, etc. which hamper their professional works.
- Instead of appointing *Shiksha Sahayakas/ Gana Shikshakas/ contractual teachers/ part time teachers, etc.*, regular teachers should be appointed following the norm and conditions of the RTE 2009.
- Efforts should be made to involve community members in school functioning through PTA, MTA, SMC, etc. This will help to increase attendance and solve dropout problem of the school-going children.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The newly appointed young teachers in tribal areas have willingness to make their schools model and exemplary. However, it will get materialised, only when they are properly guided by experts and competent academicians of teacher training institutes. Similarly, the district

administration should provide the necessary administrative support to teachers and headmasters to organise innovative programmes in schools. Besides, the community members, local educationists, intellectuals and senior citizens should also extend their help, as schools and students are of significant assets in nation-building. Most importantly, the district administration in collaboration with RTE-SSA should provide essential requirements, such as adequate teachers, teaching learning materials, etc in order to make model schools the best platform for providing holistic education to tribal children and hence mainstream the socially disadvantaged group through education. In addition, from time-to-time, teachers should be updated and oriented with emerging trends and issues, pedagogical innovations, policies and programmes of government concerning elementary education. They should be completely acquainted with the targets and be guided by the principles of NCF-2005, RTE-2009, NCFTE-2009, CCE, etc. which will help develop teaching-learning strategy and improvise learning materials for better learning of the learners.