

STATUS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN THE TRIBAL DISTRICT OF GUJARAT: A CASE STUDY OF THE DANGS DISTRICT

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Abstract

Universal primary education is a constitutional directive. Article 45 of the Directive Principles urges all states to provide 'free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years' within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution. The right to education is recognized as fundamental in the 83rd constitutional amendment, but the goal of universal education has remained a distant dream.

The status of education is a key indicator of socio-economic development while employment opportunities largely depend on the level of education. In this paper we examined the status of primary education in the Dangs district of Gujarat. The availability of basic necessary infrastructural facilities in primary schools of the Dangs districts is not satisfactory. The process of education and development does not seem to have benefited the disadvantaged tribal groups. Attempts have been made by the government and different voluntary agencies to promote education among tribal groups. The effort to enhance tribal education did not achieve its objectives because in many cases the educational needs and problems of tribal communities were not properly identified.

Introduction:

Education is the process of instruction aimed at an all-round development of individuals, providing the necessary tools and knowledge to understand and participate in day to day activities. It dispels ignorance and boosts moral values. Education is the only wealth which cannot be stolen. It builds character, provides strength of mind and increases knowledge. Education sustains the human values which contribute individual and collective well-being. It forms the basis for lifelong learning and inspires confidence to face challenges. It provides the skills to become more self-reliant and creates awareness of opportunities and rights. It also enhances the ability to manage health problems, improves levels of nutrition and childcare and helps in planning for the future.

The World Development Report (2001) indicates that the biggest problem of poverty, besides lack of food, is the lack of power directly related to a lack of knowledge. Worldwide almost 1 billion people lack basic skills to acquire knowledge. They are illiterate because they have had no primary education or because the quality of their primary education was too low.

Education is the most important function of state and local government. It is the foundation of good citizens and an investment made by the nation in its children for a well-functioning society.

Literacy and literates:

Literacy is an important characteristic of the demography. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] defines literacy¹ as the "ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society."

The census of India defines literates² as anyone 'aged 7 years and above who can both read and write with understanding in any language..... It is not necessary for a person to have received any formal education or passed any minimum educational standard for being treated as literate. People who were blind and could read in Braille are treated to be literates'. A person, who can neither read nor write or can only read but cannot write in any language, is treated as illiterate. All children of age 6 years or less, even if going to school and having picked up reading and writing, are treated as illiterate.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy>

²

<http://censusindia.gov.in/Metadata/Metada.htm#2i>

About the Dangs district:

The Dangs district is located in the southern part of Gujarat state. To the north and west lie Surat and Navsari districts whereas to its east and south are the districts of Maharashtra. Dangs lies between 20.39 degree to 21.5 degree North latitudes and 72.29 degree to 73.51 degree East longitudes. It is comprised of 311 villages and has an area of 1764 sq. km. The total population is 226,769 as per provisional figures of Census 2011 compared to 186,792 in 2001, an increase of 21.44% compared to figures of the 2001 Census. The Dangs district population constitutes 0.38% of Gujarat's population. It is totally a Scheduled Tribe [ST] area; about 94% population in the district are Scheduled Tribe. The sex ratio of girls per 1000 boys was recorded as 1007 i.e. an increase of 20 points from the 2001 Census which puts it at 987.

In education, the Dangs district has an average literacy rate of 76.8%. Male and female literacy were 84.98 and 68.75% respectively. About every village has a primary school. Dangs district has secured 14th rank in overall literacy rate with 76.80% out of 26 districts in Gujarat. Gandhinagar is on top with the male literacy rate at 93.59 % and Surat has 1st position in the female literacy rate with 81.0%. The Dangs rank is 15th in male literacy rate (84.98%) and 12th in female literacy (68.75%) out of 26 districts in Gujarat.

Educational institutions and infrastructural facilities in the Dangs district:

The availability of educational institutions equipped with an infrastructural facility plays an

important role in providing better quality education. Dangs district has only one *taluka* which, with the district headquarters, is at Ahwa. The district comprises 311 villages. As far as higher education is concerned, it has only one Arts and Commerce College and no Science College. It has one BRC, one I.T.I., and one Polytechnique College which run diploma courses, one DIET centre and two P.T.C. Colleges. There are 412 primary schools located in 32 different clusters, out of which 378 primary schools are run by the Dangs District Panchayat. There are 34 other primary schools out of which 9 are run by the Govt., 12 by different NGOs and 13 non-granted run by private management. There are 32 Govt. hostels and 52 private hostels located in the district along with one Dry hostel.

Dangs district educational monitoring team

To improve the literacy level and quality of primary education in the Dangs district, the government of Gujarat and the Dangs district panchayat have constituted Dangs District Educational Monitoring Team [DEMT]. The Dangs district has one DPEO along with one more additional DEPO and one BRC Coordinator. These officers work for the improvement of the literacy status in the district. There are 32 Cluster Resource Center Coordinators who work at these clusters and monitoring infrastructural facilities in the 378 primary schools run by the Dangs district *panchayat* and 34 primary schools run by other managements.

Infrastructure facilities in primary schools [2008 - 09]

Table-1: Infrastructure facilities in the primary schools run by the Dangs district *Panchayat* – 2008-09

Taluka / Block	Number of Schools	Electrification	Sanitation	Drinking Water	Compound Wall	Play Ground
Ahwa	12	12	10	9	11	12
Gadhvi	8	6	7	7	5	8
Dhavli Dod	7	7	6	7	2	6
Bhavandagad	11	11	11	11	6	4
Subir	12	8	10	6	3	5
Mahal	7	6	6	7	5	3
Shingana	17	14	15	11	8	14
Pipaldahad	23	8	23	5	22	16
Lavchali	9	8	9	8	7	6

Mahalpada	10	7	10	6	5	6
Linga	8	8	7	4	7	0
Morzira	12	11	9	9	10	4
Chinchli	11	11	11	5	11	4
Khambhala	7	5	7	5	5	4
Naktyahanvant	11	10	9	8	5	7
Garkhadi	9	5	7	4	7	2
Piplaidevi	19	10	15	5	10	5
Borkhal	13	11	13	9	9	7
Galkund	20	16	17	15	12	7
Vaghai	12	12	9	10	11	7
Ckihar	11	11	10	10	6	9
Sakalpatal	19	18	19	13	14	10
Dagdiaamba	5	4	5	4	4	1
Bardipada	9	6	6	5	3	3
Kalibel	17	13	15	13	11	10
Pinpari	13	11	12	12	10	8
Sarvar	11	11	10	10	5	1
Ranbhas	12	12	12	10	5	11
Nadagchod	16	16	12	11	8	8
Chikhali	7	7	6	2	6	6
Shamgahan	10	9	9	5	7	2
Malegav	10	10	8	8	9	4
The Dangs	378	314	335	254	249	200

Source: Report of Dangs District Panchayat Education Committee (Various issues), The Dangs

A good infrastructure is a precondition for attracting students, retaining them and providing quality education. Electrification helps in the use of electronic gadgets like computers, OHPs etc and in providing some comforts to students and teachers by fixing fans, water coolers etc. Sanitation is essential, especially for girl students. Lack of sanitation may result in poor enrolment. Provision of drinking water is a basic need. The report of Dangs district *panchayat* education committee reveals that 314 schools out of 378 have electrification and 335 have separate sanitation facilities. During a field visit, it was noted that the condition of the sanitation facilities was very bad, with some toilets not in useable condition. Facilities for drinking water are worrying as only 254 schools have drinking water facilities. Shamgahan, Chikhali, Piplaidevi, Chinchli, Linga,

Bardipada, Sibir, Pipaldahad, Shingana have poor drinking facilities.

Enrolment of students in all schools in the Dangs district

Enrolment plays an important role in the quantitative expansion of education and literacy rates. Various factors play an important role in determining enrolment. The environment of the school, distance, syllabus, instruction method etc. are external factors while household income, parental education, peer groups etc. are internal factors that determine enrolment rates. In Dangs district enrolment is about 50-50 for male and females with marginal regional variations. Dangs district has special policy measures to improve enrolment for the tribal community. The infrastructure facility also affects the enrolment of girls who need a separate toilet beyond a

particular age. Common toilets for boys and girls prevents many girls from enrolling beyond 5th standard. Hence the drop out ratio is high among girls.

Table 2 explains the enrolment situation in schools run by both the Dangs district *panchayat* and other

managements from 2001-02 to 2008-09. During this time, the number of primary schools increased from 405 to 412. Similarly the number of primary teachers increased from 1408 in 2001-02 to 1558 in 2008-09 while pupil teacher ratio [PTR] was about 31, Students Per Schools [SPS] is about 110 and Teacher Per School [TPS] about 4.

Table-2: Enrollment of students in all schools in the Dangs district

Year	Number of Schools	Number of Teachers	Number of Students	PTR	SPS	TPS
2001-02	405	1408	44685	31.74	110.33	3.48
2002-03	409	1405	44590	31.74	109.02	3.44
2003-04	410	1422	40369	28.39	98.46	3.47
2004-05	412	1435	43295	30.17	105.08	3.48
2005-06	412	1440	45094	31.32	109.45	3.50
2006-07	412	1432	46397	32.40	112.61	3.48
2007-08	412	1454	47534	32.69	115.37	3.53
2008-09	412	1558	48346	31.03	117.34	3.78

Source: DISE Report [Various issues]

Standard wise distribution of number of schools and their percentage in the Dangs district

About 19% schools run up to standard four. More than half (about 54%) go up to fifth standard and about 25% schools to seven standard. Thereafter very few schools are available for higher secondary studies. There are few higher secondary schools with science and no single institution is available for pursuing science graduation in the district. Field visits revealed that students have to migrate to Vyara, Surat and some parts of Maharashtra for higher studies.

Teacher wise distribution of schools and their percentage in the Dangs district

About 32% schools have only two teachers whereas more than 50% have 3-5 teachers. Less than 2% have more than ten teachers.

The number of teachers in the schools is not a major issue. In fact the student-teacher ratio is fairly good. The main problem is the medium of instruction and communication used by most teachers. More than 97% students in the district are tribal. Their verbal dialects are different and it is very difficult for them to understand the language in which most teachers teach. This may be a demotivating factor for continuing school education. This issue should be taken into consideration at the time of recruitment of teachers in the district. Priority should be given to native teachers who are familiar with the different dialects viz. Dangi, Bhil, Kunbi, Kokni, Varli and Gamit. This may help them to generate interest in the learning process, improve the quality of primary education in the district and motivate teachers as well as students to pursue education.

Enrolment strength of primary schools in the Dangs district

Table-3: Enrollment strength of primary schools in the Dangs district [2006-07 to 2008-09]

Year	Up to 100 Students	Between 100 to 200 Students	Between 200 to 300 Students	Between 300 to 400 Students	More than 400 Students	Total Students
2006-07	254	85	30	3	6	378
% of Total	67.20	22.49	7.94	0.79	1.59	100.00
2007-08	229	93	41	7	8	378

% of Total	60.58	24.60	10.85	1.85	2.12	100.00
2008-09	222	102	40	7	7	378
% of Total	58.73	26.98	10.58	1.85	1.85	100.00

Source: Report of Dangs District Panchayat Education Committee (Various issues), The Dangs

About 60% primary schools in Dangs district have up to 100 students. Recently the Government of Gujarat decided to close down primary schools which have less than 100 students. If this is implemented in Dangs district, the Government will close about 222 primary schools out of 378. This decision will have a strong negative impact on access to education especially for tribal girls as

they need to travel to distant places to get primary education. The state government should think seriously before implementing this and should think about the teachers and Vidhya Sahayak working in these schools. In Dangs district about 27% primary schools have between 100 and 200 students. Less than 4% have more than 300.

Repetition rate, Promotion rate and Dropout rate in the Dangs district

Table-4 provides classes wise details from 1st standard to 7th standard of Repetition Rate, Promotion Rate and Dropout Rate in the Dangs district for 2008-09.

Table-4: Repetition rate, Promotion rate and Dropout rate in the Dangs district [2008-09] – All Schools

Block Name Ahwa	Classes													
	1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
	G	T	G	T	G	T	G	T	G	T	G	T	G	T
Repetition Rate	21.9	22.9	16.1	16.7	17.1	18.6	11.8	12.9	13.1	14.0	11.5	11.7	11.4	11.5
Promotion Rate	72.0	70.5	78.2	77.0	77.0	75.3	81.3	79.8	68.4	68.5	81.6	81.3	0.0	0.0
Drop-out Rate	6.0	6.5	5.7	6.2	5.7	6.0	6.8	7.2	18.4	17.4	6.7	6.8	88.5	88.4

Source: DISE report, NIEPA, New Delhi

G: Girl

T: Total

For various reasons the dropout rate and repetition rate is very high in tribal areas. These rates are interrelated. In the presence of a high repetition rate, the dropout rate is also likely to be high. Factors like timing, number of teachers, instruction method, syllabus content and parents' educational background, play an important role. A careful study is required and corrective measures have to be taken. Factors affecting dropout rates are likely to vary in different regions and among different socio-economic groups.

Government Initiatives:

The Government of Gujarat has initiated a number of schemes to improve literacy rates with a special focus on improving female literacy for weaker sections of society especially for SC and ST categories. Some regional specific programmes were implemented by the state government to enhance the literacy level at regional level and reduce the inequality at regional, gender and caste level across the state.

District Primary Education Programme (DPEP - II)³

Gujarat has a low female literacy rate, worse in the case of Scheduled Tribe females. The Government of India and of Gujarat have identified these major lacunae and tried to involve external agencies to solve the problem. The International Development Agency [IDA], with financial aid from the Government of Netherlands, selected Gujarat for implementation of the District Primary Education Programme [DPEP] Phase- II for 1995-2002. This envisaged selection of the three most backward districts of the state viz. Banaskantha, Panchmahals and Dangs, where the female literacy rate is well below the National index.

Backward class area introduction⁴

³ <http://gujarat-education.gov.in/ssa/index.htm>

In 2005-06 the Education Department Gujarat introduced Backward Class Area-related work in their budget in which the form of financial expenses and per programme targets is set. Under this scheme, the following initiatives have been taken by Gujarat for secondary education, higher secondary and special education.

1. Secondary education and higher secondary education:

Secondary school management has been delegated to private *mandals* which are reimbursed from government grants.

2. Special education:

In institutes of special education, various concessions are included such as scholarships and exemption from fees. Students of higher education are given merit scholarships from government funds.

3. Fees forgone /Exemption from fees:

The benefit of fee-forgone schemes are available to students whose parents' annual income is less than Rs 25000.

Dictionaries in Dangi and Bhili dialects⁵

Gujarat has developed dictionaries in Dangi and Bhili dialects. A local word glossary in Dangi has been prepared and distributed in schools for class I-IV. Similarly a local word glossary in Adivasi dialect has been prepared for class I-IV in Banaskantha district and distributed in schools. The Vidhya Sahayaks were given training on the use of these dictionaries. Gujarat has also initiated extensive work for preparation of TLM in tribal languages. This included flash cards for different languages and cards for mathematics. These have been supplied to all schools in tribal areas.

⁴Commissionerate of Mid Day Meal & School-Education Department, Government Gujarat, Gandhinagar <http://www.cos-mdm.gujarat.gov.in/school-info/budget06-01.htm>

⁵ Vinoba Gautam, Education of tribal children in India and the issue of Medium of Instruction: A Janshala experience http://www.sil.org/asia/ldc/parallel_papers/vinoba_gautam.pdf

Conclusion

Article 45 of the Directive Principles of the constitution urges all states to provide 'free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years' within a period of ten years from the commencement of the constitution. The right to education is recognized as a fundamental right in the 83rd constitutional amendment, but even then the goal of universal education has remained a distant dream.

The Gujarat government has initiated a number of schemes to improve literacy rates with special focus on improving female literacy in weaker sections of society, especially SC and ST. The process of education and development does not seem to benefit the disadvantaged tribal groups in the Dangs district much. If the educational needs and problems of tribal communities are properly identified then efforts to enhance their education will achieve their objectives.

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