

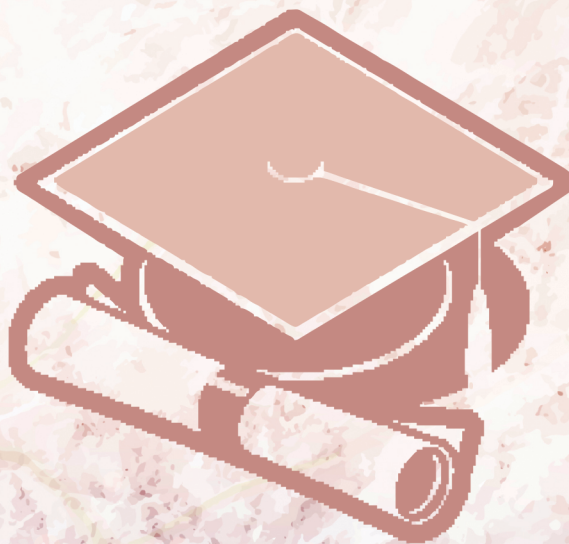
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TEACHING IN THE LENS OF CULTURE: A DÉJÀ VU OF TRIBAL TEACHERS

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Abstract

Culture is the normative way of expressing one's thoughts and actions among members of a society. Cultural transmission encompasses the artistic expressions, belief systems, and societal structures that are inherited and perpetuated across successive generations within a given population. Usually, it emerges from a particular geographical area or locale. In the context of education, culture is the fundamental essence of our ideas and practices. It profoundly influences our cognitive processes, behavioural patterns, perceptual frameworks, and communicative dynamics. Consequently, Culture plays a crucial role in shaping the methods and outcomes of both teaching and learning endeavours. Cultural variations give rise to diverse attitudes and practices within the realm of education. In this article, the researchers try to discuss the experiences and opinions of tribal teachers in the context of culturally responsive teaching. Data were collected from the tribal teachers through interviews; and were analyzed to come to definite conclusions.

Key Words: teaching, tribal teachers, culture

INTRODUCTION

Education has a crucial role in the formation and development of people, communities, and societies as a whole. Education functions as the primary channel via which knowledge is disseminated, skills are cultivated, and values are implanted. In recent times, there has been an increasing acknowledgement of the significance of integrating cultural viewpoints within the realm of education. The shift in emphasis recognizes the profound impact of incorporating cultural perspectives into education, allowing educators to foster inclusive and significant learning opportunities for every student.

Culture, encompassing several interpretations, can be characterized as the collective behaviours and customs exhibited by a particular social group, primarily emphasizing specific exterior facets such as language, religion, cuisine, arts, traditions, and festivals. Cultures are dynamic entities that exhibit overlapping and interactive characteristics. Cultural exchanges have the potential to grow widespread among interdependent cultures, yet intercultural contacts among individuals, communities, and societies can give rise to cultural friction within the context of a multicultural society (Diene, 2007 cited in Mukherjee 2019).

Education can acquire a new and illuminating perspective when taught through the lens of culture. It promotes multicultural understanding while allowing pupils to appreciate their own cultural background. Particularly tribal teachers contribute a special and priceless depth of information rooted in their customs and experiences. There is an increasing recognition of the connections between cultural diversity and education, as well as the significance of incorporating the diverse needs of learners and a variety of approaches and subject matter into educational practises. This integration aims to achieve the goal of fostering a sense of coexistence and mutual understanding among individuals, as emphasised by Delors et. al. (1996), through the implementation of culturally sensitive teaching and learning methods (Mukherjee, 2019).

The aim of this paper is to explore the notion of pedagogy from a cultural perspective and analyse the substantial influence exerted by tribal teachers within this context.

OBJECTIVES

- ◁ To Explore the difficulties and experiences faced by tribal teachers when delivering instruction through a cultural perspective.

METHOD

This study employed the Descriptive Survey method. In this article, the researchers collected data through Focus group discussions. The researcher collected data from 04 Santali medium schools in West Bengal. 18 tribal Teachers were participated in focus group discussion and share their experiences. Data were collected from the tribal teachers through interviews; and were analyzed to come to definite conclusions.

DISCUSSION

Criteria	Opinion
Problems	1. <i>Problem related to infrastructure:</i> Many tribal schools lack basic facilities such as classrooms, furniture, libraries, and computer laboratories. As per the teacher from Lohat High School, "We have only four classrooms in our School and we teach Eight different Classes (Class-V to Class-XII). There is no Staff room, no Computer, no office room. Our infrastructural condition is very poor." As per the Researcher survey, 72% of teachers highlighted this problem.
	2. <i>Language:</i> language is one of the important pillars of education. Language is one of the main issues in such schools, claims the One Santali Subject Teacher from Lohat High School. The families of students who speak Santali at home are unfamiliar with the Alchiki script. The majority of pupils are first-generation learners, and although their families are aware that they have studied in Bengali or English, they are not familiar with the Alchiki script. As per the survey, 78% of teachers highlighted this problem.

Problems	3. Textbook Content: Textbook content plays an important role in education. Although the textbooks taught to Santali medium students are in the Santali language, there is no mention of Santali culture and their work except Santali literature. So many times, students find it difficult to understand and conceptualize the content. As per the Researcher survey, 61% of teachers highlighted this problem 4. Problem-related to MLL: School readiness is one of the important things in the education system. Most of the Tribal students are first-generation learners. As per the opinion of a Teacher from Pakhiradanga Jr. High School (Santali Medium), Murshidabad, Many of the students here do not even know the alphabet when they are enrolled in class five. As per the Researcher survey 88% of teachers highlighted this problem 5. Family Support of Students: Family support is an important factor in education. But we know from talking to teachers that tribal school students do not get educational help from home, most of their parents are illiterate. As a result, their only source of education is school. As per the Researcher survey 50% of teachers highlighted this problem. 6. Shortage of Teachers: Teachers are the most important pillar of the teaching system. The researchers discussed with the tribal teachers and found out that the teacher problem is one of the pressing problems of the tribal schools. According to the teacher of Santali School in Bankura, there are only four teachers and they teach from class five to twelve. The same problems are also highlighted by Santali medium school teachers from Purulia and Murshidabad schools. As per the survey, 88% of teachers highlighted this problem. 7. Financial: Financial problems are one of The Major problems of Tribal Teachers. Most of The Students of tribal schools come from very poor families. Their parents are daily workers. As per the survey, 72% of teachers highlighted this problem.
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Here, the researcher listed the problems of Tribals teacher in a Diagram (Fig-1).The diagram is written hereunder-

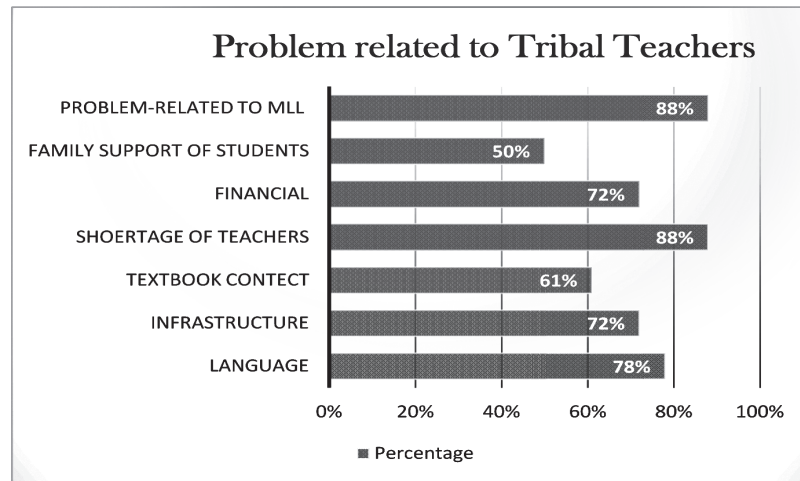


Fig-1: Problems faced by Tribal Teachers.

Curriculum	Curricular perspective	Curriculum can be said to be the backbone of the traditional education system. So, the curriculum needs to be appropriate. The researchers talked to the teachers and found that the curriculum here does not reflect cultural issues. Only Santali literature books reflect Santali culture and art.
	Co-Curricular	Co-curricular activities refer to voluntary activities that occur outside the standard academic curriculum. These institutions offer students the chance to explore their interests, enhance their abilities, and participate in various co-curricular activities, encompassing social, cultural, athletic, and academic endeavors beyond the traditional classroom environment. Co-curricular activities serve as an expansion of the structured educational experiences inside a course or academic program. According to the teacher of Lohat High School, Purulia, when any cultural occasion is celebrated at School, students perform Santali songs, dances etc. Also,a Santali song, namely “Nehar sereng (Johar Johar Bidu Chandan)” performed by students at the morning assembly after the prayer and national anthem.

Use of Teaching method	Teaching method plays a very important role in any education. The use of appropriate teaching methods facilitates the student's understanding of the course. And they can teach with joy. Most of the teachers said that when they teach, they try to make the teaching method suitable for the students. According to a teacher at Bankura Santali Medium School, they teach the students very slowly and try to explain the topic by breaking up the text into smaller units.												
Language	One effective approach to safeguarding and respecting indigenous cultures involves the implementation of educational programmes that prioritise the instruction of tribal languages. Within tribal communities, the practice of cultural identification is actively fostered, thereby contributing to the preservation of a diverse language heritage. The potential to bridge the disparity in knowledge acquisition between traditional and modern education can be realized through the incorporation of tribal languages as a primary medium of instruction. According to the one santali subject teacher from Lohat High School, language is one of the major problems in such schools. Students speak Santali at home but their families are not familiar with the Alchiki script. Most of the students are first-generation learners.												
Teachers Suggestions	1. As per the teachers' opinion Recruitment of teachers is to be made on the basis of their knowledge of the Santali language. As per the survey, 88% of teachers highlighted these suggestions. 2. There is a dearth of Science Teachers in many schools which is a real hindrance. As per the survey, 88% of teachers highlighted these suggestions. 3. These teachers also suggested the books available for students be culture-centric and localized. As per the survey, 61% of teachers highlighted these suggestions. 4. It is also suggested that the number of classrooms needs to be enhanced. As per the survey, 67% of teachers highlighted these suggestions. <table border="1"> <caption>Suggestions</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Suggestion</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Teachers recruitment</td> <td>88%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Recruitment of Science faculty</td> <td>88%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Development of Infrastructure</td> <td>67%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Curriculum reforms</td> <td>61%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Others</td> <td>50%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Fig-2: Suggestions of Teachers about the Development of Tribal Education.	Suggestion	Percentage	Teachers recruitment	88%	Recruitment of Science faculty	88%	Development of Infrastructure	67%	Curriculum reforms	61%	Others	50%
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CONCLUSION

This study highlighted the challenges and experiences of tribal teachers while teaching in Santali medium schools. This study is an infield observation. It is found that the impact of culture on teaching and learning is minimal.

The findings of the study highlight several challenges faced by tribal teachers, including inadequate infrastructure, linguistic barriers, a dearth of culturally relevant textbook materials, students who are unprepared for formal education, insufficient familial support, and financial constraints. The aforementioned challenges impede the effective implementation of culturally responsive instructional approaches and provide obstacles to the academic achievement of indigenous students.

The study found the importance of designing courses that consider the cultural diversity and heritage of indigenous communities. It is imperative for lawmakers, educational authorities, and institutions to prioritise the specific needs of tribal instructors and students. Inclusive and empowered educational environments have the potential to yield significant benefits for tribal communities, provided that there is an improvement in infrastructure, the implementation of culturally relevant curricula, the provision of professional development opportunities, and the allocation of financial assistance. The establishment of a complete and equitable educational system for all children necessitates the recognition and appreciation of the cultural and educational contributions made by tribal educators.

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