

## Perception of Secondary School Tribal Students towards Secondary Level Curriculum

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore the perception of secondary school tribal students towards their curriculum. The study was conducted with a sample of 459 secondary school tribal students studying in five districts of Tamil Nadu. A likert type scale was developed to measure the “Secondary school tribal students’ perception towards their curriculum”. The scale consists of 23 statements. Descriptive statistics like frequency and percentage was computed. The findings revealed that around 87% of secondary school tribal students perceived that a separate curriculum should be developed for tribal students at secondary level. The findings of the study have significant implications to the school heads, teachers, curriculum planners, and other stakeholders who directly or indirectly involved in evolving secondary school curriculum.

### **1.Introduction**

The long-term economic growth and sustainable development of the nation entirely depends upon the quality of education system built on the premises of availability, accessibility, affordability and equity. Education is one of the important needs of human life and is considered a key indicator of human development and progress of a country. It is the foundation for building an enlightened, self-reliant society and skilled workforce (Chakraborty, 2011). Secondary education is the link between primary education on the one end and the university education on the other. Secondary education seeks to provide future leadership to the society in various walks of life. It is also one of the most important levels for deciding on the line of study and career one wants to pursue in future.

### **2. Framework of the study**

Research studies revealed that several key areas regarding tribal students and the secondary school curriculum in India and abroad. These include challenges related to language barriers, cultural disconnect, economic factors, and the need for

more localized and relevant curriculum content. Tribal has specific culture, tradition and beliefs, way of living and doing things. A well- designed curriculum plays a critical role in addressing the needs of the society. All curriculum and pedagogy from foundational stage onwards, will be redesigned to be strongly rooted in the Indian and local context and ethos in terms of culture, traditions, heritage, customs, language, philosophy, geography, ancient and contemporary knowledge, societal and scientific needs, indigenous and traditional way of learning etc., in order to ensure that education is maximally relatable, relevant, interesting, and effective for our students (NEP, 2020, 4.29). The curriculum prescribed by the school board to be taught in the school seems to them quite unattractable and uninteresting because they feel their environment, beliefs, way of living, and feelings are not reflected in the curriculum and in no way much useful for them is earning and living. The current curriculum is overloaded with too many subjects that are not fully necessary and useful. As a result, these children do not show keen interest and love for studying subjects (Sangeetha and Pavithra, 2003). The curriculum, bears no relation to the economic and social life of ST communities and instead attempts to wean young people away from it (Sujatha, 2002). Mona Sedwal and Sangeeta Kamat (2008) expressed that a separate, although related area of reform, is that of curriculum content, and learning and teaching approaches. At elementary level, the curricula do not teach about their struggles for equity and dignity of the oppressive nature of the caste system, and it is barely dealt with at secondary level either. Further, school curriculums are restricted to bookish, and abstract learning, and do not utilise local examples, materials and methods of learning to teach these concepts. The curriculum adopted in the tribal schools is same as in the mainstream schools. Contextualized curriculum is not available. About 7% of the teachers have made efforts to contextualise curriculum to the tribal culture. Further, 57% principals and 77% of teachers feel the need for a revision in the present curriculum. More often than not, it is always found that the available standard curriculum and syllabus may not be relevant to the levels of tribal students. It leads to disinterest and eventually makes them disengage and eventually drop out of school (Santoshini, 2023).

### **3. Objective of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to explore the perceptions of secondary school tribal students' perception towards their curriculum.

## 4. Methods and Materials

### 4.1 Design

In execution of the present study descriptive survey method was employed.

### 4.2 Population and Sample

The population of the present study consists of all the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> standard tribal students studying in the secondary schools of the selected five districts namely Dharmapuri, Namakkal, Nilgiri, Salem, and Thiruvannamalai. The sample of the study consists of 459 tribal students studying in various schools. Out of the total samples of 459, there are 266 boys and 193 girls.

### 4.3 Research Instrument Used

For the present study the standardized tool used is "Perception of Secondary School Tribal students towards Secondary Level Curriculum" which was developed by the investigator and research supervisor in the year, 2023.

### 4.4. Statistical Techniques Employed

The data was tabulated and analyzed by using SPSS Software. Descriptive statistics like frequency and percentage was calculated.

## 5. Analysts of Data and Interpretation

Table 1

Secondary school tribal students' perception towards secondary school curriculum

S.No	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Separate curriculum should be developed for tribal students	217	47.3	184	40.1	29	6.3	29	6.3
2	Present school curriculum makes the students to understand the social –economic development of the tribes.	64	13.9	84	18.3	181	39.4	130	28.3
3	Provisions are available in the school curriculum for developing the tribal languages.	75	16.3	77	16.8	177	38.6	130	28.3
4	State curriculum cater the needs of the students	69	15.0	76	16.6	137	29.8	177	38.6
5	The school curriculum integrates the cultural values of the tribes	72	15.7	70	15.3	180	39.2	137	29.8
6	The school curriculum presence the heritage of the tribes	65	14.2	72	15.7	153	33.3	169	36.8
7	The school curriculum reflects the sovereignty of the tribes.	72	15.7	78	17.0	139	30.3	170	37.0
8	The school curriculum integrates the values and identity of the tribes.	66	14.4	74	16.1	146	31.8	173	37.7
9	Life skills, employability skills, and vocational training aspects are available in the school curriculum.	73	15.9	80	17.4	173	37.7	133	29.0
10	Contents related to tribal groups rights and dignity are available in the school curriculum.	74	16.1	77	16.8	138	30.1	170	37.0
11	The important tribal occupations of agriculture, hunting, honey collecting are available to the school curriculum.	69	15.0	86	18.7	136	29.6	168	36.6
12	The textbooks and curriculum contains the local knowledge of the tribes.	65	14.2	81	17.6	146	31.8	167	36.4
13	Salient features of festivals and celebrities are available in the school curriculum	70	15.3	69	15.0	147	32.0	173	37.7
14	The school curriculum elaborates how the natural resources and minerals that are available in the hills	70	15.3	75	16.3	175	38.1	139	30.3
15	Using the tribal dialect as a medium to transact the State curriculum	78	17.0	71	15.5	139	30.3	171	37.3
16	The school curriculum explores the tribal child innate potential.	69	15.0	70	15.3	141	30.7	179	39.0
17	The school curriculum made provisions in the teaching learning process in tribal student's mother –tongue.	68	14.8	77	16.8	181	39.4	133	29.0
18	The school curriculum connecting knowledge to life outside the school.	67	14.6	79	17.2	141	30.7	172	37.5
19	The Government provides training facilities to non-tribal teachers to work in tribal areas.	31	6.8	29	6.3	210	45.8	189	41.2
20	In tribal schools' mother tongue should be the medium of instruction.	258	56.2	180	39.2	20	4.4	21	4.6
21	The teaching –learning materials are available in tribal languages	58	12.6	71	15.5	213	46.4	117	25.5
22	Teachers are available to teach both tribal languages and multi – language.	69	15.0	70	15.3	179	39.0	141	30.7
23	Provisions are available for the parents to participate in the school development activities.	64	13.9	68	14.8	145	31.6	182	39.7

The following are the observations from table 1:

- Around 87% of tribal students perceived that special curriculum should be developed for tribal students at secondary level.
- 67% of students viewed that the present secondary level curriculum does not makes the students to understand the socio-economic development of the tribes.
- Three fourth of the students commented that there is no provision for developing tribal language in the present curriculum.
- 68% of students opined that curriculum does not cater that need of the tribal students.
- 69% of students opined that the cultural values of the tribals were that not integrated in the school curriculum.
- Around 70% of the students said that the heritage of the tribes are not included in the curriculum.
- Nearly 70% of the students said that the school curriculum does not integrated the values and identity of the tribes.
- 67% of the students stated that life skills, employability skills and vocational training are not available in the secondary curriculum.
- 67% of the students said that the contents related to tribal groups rights and dignity are not incorporated in the curriculum.
- Around 66% of the students remarked that the important tribal occupations like agriculture, hunting and honey collecting are not reflected in the curriculum.
- 68% of students observed that local knowledge of the tribes are not available in the textbook and curriculum.
- Around 70% of students stated that tribal people festivals and celebrations are not placed in the secondary curriculum.
- 68% of the students remarked that the school curriculum does not say the natural resources and minerals that are available in the hills are to be safeguarded.
- 68% of the students expressed that state curriculum is not designed to transact in tribal didact.
- Around 70% of the students viewed that the school curriculum does not explore the tribal students' innate potential.
- 68% of the students opined that in school curriculum there is no provision for the teaching learning process in tribal students' mother-tongue.

- 87% of the students opined that the government does not offer training to the non-tribal teachers those who are working in tribal area schools.
- 91% of the students told that in tribal schools' mother-tongue should be the medium of instruction.
- 72% of the students viewed that that teaching-learning materials are not available in tribal language.
- 70% of the students said that teachers are not available to teach both a tribal language and multi-language.
- 71% of the students of opinion that there is no provision for the parents to participate in the school developmental activities.

## 6. Conclusion

Education is the single most important means by which individuals and society can improve personal endowments, build capacity levels, overcome barriers, and expand opportunities for a sustained improvement in their well-being.

The findings of the present study revealed that majority of the secondary school tribal students perceived that a separate curriculum should be developed for them. Further, earlier research suggests that tribal students have unique cognitive styles and learning strategies that are not always well-suited to mainstream education. Hence, a separate curriculum for tribal schools at secondary level in India is needed to address their unique educational needs, cultural contents, and the challenges they faced in accessing and succeeding within the mainstream education system. This can lead to better learning outcomes, higher retention rates, and improved social inclusion for tribal students.

## 7. References

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