CHAPTER IV

TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS
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Learning becomes chiefly a process of stimulus response, mental discipline or some similar practice devoted mainly to absorption of and/or training for unity with the already given cultural environment. Learning is an array of learned interests, skills and observances (right conduct and obligations, ethical values, ritual requirements and so on), from childhood into adulthood (Fortes, 1938: 42-43). Broadly, education in the traditional social system was a matter of assimilation rather than formal teaching and the child learned through contacts, observations, and active participation in daily life. Through his daily activities, he gradually acquires the material and spiritual fundamentals of social life: the values, customs, and traditions of his society, attitudes, beliefs, and world view, and the meaning of life in general.

Teaching is a way of forming a person's moral character. In teaching, the educator will transmit the knowledge, skills, and values to the students. In primitive societies the tribal parents taught them traditional skills of hunting and gathering. The tribal children also acquire traditional skills from their siblings.
A child when it joins the school enters a new world, where it gets exposed to a wider, continuous, conscious and directed ways of learning. Schooling is learning in a school, and a school is an institution which deliberately and systematically, by the presentation of symbols in reading matter, lectures, or ritual, attempts to transform from a condition of ignorance to one of enlightenment, the intellect, the morality, and the technical knowledge and skills of an attentive group of persons assembled in a definite place at a definite time.

A school system can draw active response and enthusiastic participation from the local population if it reflects the local culture. To be more specific, if the teaching-learning process adopted in the school maintains continuity with and reflects the local cultures, under such atmosphere the school can play a constructive and utilitarian role in the local community life, the teachers can teach the students effectively, if they know the tribal culture and the language. The students can learn the lessons effectively, if the contents of education, instruction given in the classroom and other learning activities are related to their culture.

Important components for teaching-learning process are the content of education, medium of instruction, the role of the teacher, and methods of teaching.
In the following few pages, the state of teaching-learning process in the Ashram Schools is examined in the light of the observations as made in the preceding pages.

Contents of Education or Curriculum

The local community can actively participate in the school system if the curriculum adopted in the school maintains continuity with and reflects the local cultures. Thereby the school system can play a utilitarian role in the local community life. Mahapatra (1967: 115) observes, that "...... we may take cultivation without plough and horticulture as practised in the traditional culture as the basis of the curricula for nature-study, geography, history (including the history of technological development) and economics etc., but orient this towards fostering or scientific outlook for greater efficiency in production".

Unfortunately, the curriculum in vogue in schools in tribal areas in no way reflects the culture of the local tribal communities and does not cater to the specific needs of these communities. Ashram Schools have adopted the same curriculum used in non-tribal schools of the state. The curriculum caters to the needs of non-tribal schools in the state and the schools including Ashram Schools in tribal areas which are supposed to serve the local tribal communities are not doing so.
The students learn the subjects like the regional language, Telugu, English, Mathematics, General Science and Social Studies. The subjects taught at the level of I and II standards are only Telugu and Arithmetic. Apart from Telugu and Mathematics, General Science and Social Studies are taught from the standard III to V. In addition to these subjects English and Hindi are being taught from standard VI to X.

The content of the books comprises descriptions of national personalities, stories, events and places with which the tribal students are not familiar. Arithmetic sums like complex fractions, finding out the lowest common factor are included in the Mathematics.

Telugu texts consist of poems and essays written by non-tribal people mostly dealing with the Hindu puranas and pantheon. These texts also consist of lessons on Christianity, Islam, Jainism and Buddhism.

Social Studies consist of mainly history of non-tribal areas and their leaders and events. The Botany lessons include strange flora and fauna but not the flora and fauna with which the students are familiar.

All these aspects are alien to a tribal student. He thinks that he is learning about the world with which he is not familiar and concerned with.
In the schools many of the students have expressed their difficulty in understanding the subjects. In order to ascertain the nature of educational hardships, the tribal students in the Ashram Schools were interviewed how they had been getting on with their studies. The difficulties expressed by the students in various subjects are given in the following Table.

Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>No. of students feeling difficulty</th>
<th>Percentage of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Mathematics and Science</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mathematics, Science and Social Studies</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>26.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mathematics and English</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>24.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>100.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Table shows that 32.08 per cent of the students felt difficulty in Mathematics and Science, 26.74 per cent in Mathematics, Science and Social Studies; 24.60 per cent in Mathematics and English and 16.58 per cent in Science subjects.
It is interesting to note that almost all the students have difficulty in Mathematics. Perhaps this is mainly due to the lack of tradition of numeracy in tribal culture of this area. The tribals of this area as well as other areas in the country hardly count up to 20. Absence of the tradition of numeracy is one important reason why these tribals have become victims of exploitation by the non-tribal traders and money lenders. The following comments of the students throw light on the problem. A student of the Donubai Ashram School says, "I feel difficulty in subjects like Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. The contents of the Mathematics are very difficult. I cannot understand Algebra. I feel very difficult to remember the dates and events in History. The Geography of the country is very difficult to me".

Another student of Polla Ashram School says, "I feel very difficult in Mathematics and Science. Arithmetic sums like fractions are very difficult to me. The contents of the Science like genetic structure and evolution are too difficult to understand".

Speaking about Mathematics the same student adds that even his elders cannot count beyond twenty. There is no tradition of numeracy in their community. He feels teaching of Mathematics should be done in an easy method so as to
enable the tribal students to understand without much difficulty. The following comments of the teachers throw light on this problem:

A teacher of Malli Ashram School says, "the students feel difficulty in understanding subjects like Mathematics, Science and Social Studies. The contents of these books are unknown to the children. The courses of studies are too vast to be covered in a year. When I see the blank faces of the students, I lose interest in teaching".

A teacher of the Polla Ashram School says, "the contents of Social Studies speak about the Geography of the state, India and the world but not the regional geography and the students feel difficulty in comprehending these subjects".

The tribal child who lives in geographical isolation can hardly assimilate any information about history of the country and the world. Moreover majority of the tribal students have claimed difficulty in coping with Mathematics. It is because of lack of tradition of numeracy in these communities. It is essential to design easy methods of teaching of Mathematics so as to enable the tribal student to cope with this subject without difficulty. It is very essential that curriculum contains some features of tribal
life and culture. A few lessons may be included on tribal heroes and leaders, festivals, gods and goddesses. Further, nature study can include local flora and fauna with which the tribal students are familiar. This mixing provides them knowledge about the wider world as well as their own world and also creates interest in the tribal student. Including a few aspects of tribal culture in the curriculum may create some pride in their culture, which is essential for their very survival.

Elwin has observed that, "in the successful formulation of the policy for tribal education text books assume great importance. They should include lessons depicting the life of the tribals; their folk, love songs, history and the lives of their cultural heroes. These subjects should be woven into ordinary text books as well to enable the non-tribal and tribal people to understand each other. This will add to their regard for each other and give them added confidence that their way of life, history and culture are getting adequate support from other members of the society".

Vocational Training

The tribal communities are skilled in certain crafts like carpentry and blacksmithy in their traditional way. Even the children are adept in handling the traditional tools. The same skill can be sharpened by providing them
further training in handling modern tools and in making goods for the market. This is one area where a continuity can be maintained between the school and the community.

The tribal students when educated in crafts will carry their knowledge and skills to their homes. This will be very useful not only in improving their economy but in upgrading their skills through demonstrative effects. Attached craft sections like weaving, tailoring, smithy, cane, bamboo work, gardening, agriculture and, a kitchen garden make the pupils self-sufficient and self-respecting. This training will be useful to the students after completing the school life. Way back in 1950's Chattopadhyay observed that "this linking of education at early stage to later life activities ...... is extremely valuable for the students..... Since all the tribal people excepting a few isolated and small group are acquainted with agriculture, and practise it, and among most of the tribes this form of food production takes the first place not only in economic life but also as cultural activity in general, we may centre the education of tribal folk round this occupation"

Unfortunately the Ashram Schools in the area do not have any vocational courses. The most important reason for this lapse is the lack of interest on the part of the school management.
It is noted that most of the schools have no teachers to impart vocational training, those few schools which have trained teachers are not able to utilize their services. For example, K. Satyanarayana Murthy, a teacher working in Donubai Ashram High School, has received specialised training in carpentry and has thirteen years of experience. He has been working in the school since 1984. He pointed out that he is not imparting training in carpentry to the students due to lack of carpentry tools. He has given a memorandum to the management to equip the school with necessary tools but the management has not responded so far. Instead of carpentry in which he is trained and employed to teach, he teaches Social Studies to the students of III standard.

Another such example can be heard from Malli Upper Primary Ashram School. Mrs. Eswaramma is a trained craft instructor in this school in tailoring and embroidery. She has been working as teacher for the past fifteen years. She is supposed to train the girl students of Ashram School in tailoring and embroidery. Instead of doing this she is teaching general education to the students of I standard.

It is essential to introduce vocational courses in Ashram Schools and train each student at least in one vocation. S.N. Ratha (1986: 7) has observed that, "the supplementary curriculum should be biased towards crafts and should
inculcate a sense of dignity of labour, qualities of cooperation and social discipline.

Medium of Instruction

A school system can draw active response and enthusiastic participation from the local population if it reflects the local culture. To be more specific, if the same is imparted through a language familiar to the young learners, it can attract as well as sustain the enthusiasm and participation.

Of course, one cannot overlook the fact that if local dialects are used in schools, the students feel comfortable and familiar with the school environment and regularly attend the school, and the process of learning will be quicker. At present there is more possibility for learning without comprehension. They may be able to link the concepts and realities only in the ease of things familiar to them. The knowledge of a child grows like compilation in a dictionary without any linkage with the real world. The process of concept formation simply does not start, in the case of a vast majority of tribal children, the gruelling experience of education also comes to an end at this stage itself" (Sharma, 1976: 19).

In the Ashram Schools, the medium of instruction is not the mother tongue of the student but Telugu, the regional language. A tribal child who has practically no knowledge
of the regional language is placed at a great disadvantage if it is used as a medium of instruction. By virtue of having learnt the script the school children may be able to read the contents of text books but they may not be able to understand what actually the lessons contain. This may be the main reason for low achievement of the tribal students. Here lies the importance of one's own mother tongue. It is generally assumed that any one can understand contents better and in a shorter duration when taught in one's own mother tongue than when taught through an alien tongue. L.R.N. Srivastava (1967: 94-95), observes that "generally speaking, tribal children have little knowledge of the regional languages and since the instructions in schools are imparted through the regional languages they are placed at a great disadvantage. At many a place in tribal areas, I have seen that tribal children can read - though not fluently - books but most of them cannot express in their own words what they have read about. This naturally affects their general proficiency and achievement in the examinations".

In this context Savara students are suffering more than the Jatapus since the former have very little knowledge of the regional language. This is one of the important reasons for many Savara students for dropping out from the schools.
The Jatapu students do not face the problem to the same degree as that of Savaras since the latter are quite familiar with the regional languages.

Many teachers have pointed out that the Savara students are facing problems in understanding the lessons because of the use of Telugu as medium of instruction.

A teacher of Donubai Ashram High School says, "Savara students feel difficult to understand the lesson since they are taught in the language not known to them. Many of the Savara students during teaching do not give any indication that they are able to understand what is being taught by the teacher. Their faces are blank and their eyes are far away".

Savara students take longer time to get used to the school environment as well as to follow the instruction than that of Jatapu students. The situation can be remedied to a certain extent if only the teachers are able to explain in the mother tongue of the pupil. S.N. Ratha (1986: 9) observes that, "the medium of instruction should be the language of the pupil. There seems to be little understanding of what his language means to a tribal. It is to him a vital element in his culture. He feels at home in it, and there is little doubt that by encouraging it, we definitely assist the process of integration. While teaching regional and national languages the most important tribal languages should not be forgotten".
The Role of the Teacher

The most important component in teaching-learning process is the 'teacher'. The impact of any educational programme or innovation on the people operates through the teacher. No other innovation such as audio-visual equipment can replace the role of the teacher in the educational system. Hence, the role of the teacher in tribal areas assumes a special significance.

The efficiency of a system of education depends inevitably on the quality of teachers. Without good teachers even the best system of education suffers. The defects of even the bad system of education could be overcome by good teachers. Srivastava (1968), Ambasht (1970), Rathnaiah (1977), and other scholars pointed out that if the 'teacher' who is the nerve centre of school system becomes frustrated and indifferent, the whole system collapses, and such a situation exists today with teachers working in local tribal schools.

Teacher has to play a significant role in society because it is he who shapes the individuals, and the quality of a society depends upon the quality of individuals. Since the individual is largely the product of the training he receives, the teacher who is the architect of such an individual, plays a decisive role in society. Teachers as a group are regarded as the torch-bearers of culture, and hence they are to be kept out of other activities of life.
Teacher is the 'director of learning'. That is, the teacher feels that transmission of the subject matter and academic skills is the most important aspect of his role.

A teacher is a dynamic link between the traditional society and the modern world.

A teacher to be effective in tribal school system should have a sympathetic understanding of the tribal way of life, with at least a minimum working knowledge of the local dialect. If the teacher and the taught belong to the same culture, it is easier to impart instruction. "Serious conflicts and deep-seated maladjustment may result from education received at the hands of the persons whose cultural or subcultural frames of reference differ" (Herskovits, 1963: 310-326).

The most important problem faced by a teacher is the difficulty in communication with the tribal students due to lack of knowledge of tribal dialect. In other words, this limitation leads to ineffectiveness of teaching in the formal system and slow progress of education. But in the case of the present tribal school system, where majority of the teachers come from a different cultural background, the students' problems are many. One of the problems faced by the teacher is in communicating himself with his pupils. It means a communication gap exists between the teacher
and the taught. As mentioned earlier, this communication gap comes into play mainly because neither the Savara students are in a position to understand the language spoken by the teachers nor the teachers in a position to make out the language spoken by their pupils.

A teacher who is dedicated and enthusiastic can play a very significant role in tribal school system. But the living and working conditions under which he has to operate and the cultural gap between himself and the taught in the existing circumstances in tribal areas affect the efficiency of a teacher. L.R.N. Srivastava (1968: 290) said that the teacher is the pivot of educational structure in tribal areas and due to the poor working and living conditions and social status many teachers are unable to play an effective role. Another important point raised is the fact that many of the teachers working in tribal schools are non-tribals with a different cultural background and instead of getting minimised as initiators of change, in many cases they are introducing inferiority complexities among communities in which they are working.

The teacher–student ratio is one of the factors in the teaching-learning process. If the school does not maintain optimum teacher–student ratio, it affects the teaching-learning process. If sufficient number of teachers are not
available in the school, the teachers have to teach not only large number of students but multiple standards. Over-work reduces the efficiency of the teachers by making them mechanical in their approach and attitude. Further in tribal areas a teacher needs to bestow personal attention on each student, particularly on those who are not able to cope with the work. This becomes impossible if the teacher-student ratio is abnormal.

It is a general norm, that is in tribal areas the teacher-student ratio of 1:20 should be maintained.

As mentioned earlier that in the area of the study, out of six schools, two schools maintain the teacher-student ratio but the remaining four schools do not. The Donubai and Malli Ashram Schools have sufficient number of teachers whereas the Polla, Sambham, Samarelli and Vondrajola schools have inadequate number of teachers.

The teachers of Sambham, Polla and Samarelli Ashram Schools have pointed out that they are not able to teach effectively as they have to handle a large number of students in each standard. The statement given below recorded from a teacher of Sambham Ashram School clearly indicates that the teacher-student ratio has affected the teaching-learning process.
A teacher of Sambham Ashram School says, "due to shortage of teachers I am handling multiple classes every day. Naturally under these circumstances I am not effective in teaching. Because of large number of students present in the class, the students tend to make more noise and my concentration suffers".

Other problems of the teachers working in the area like lack of residential accommodation, market facilities and higher educational facilities for their children also affect the efficiency on the teacher as mentioned earlier.

The teacher has to assume the role of a culture-broker, because he has to imbibe a set of values and goals among the tribal students who live in a world of their own, particularly the tribal population amidst whom the school is located.

In addition, he must have the right temperament, desire and the urge to work among the disadvantaged groups, apart from the fact that he should be adequately equipped to meet any unforeseen situation. In other words, he should be able to communicate and interact effectively, establishing proper rapport with the local community. This requires on the part of the teacher, at least the basic understanding of the dialect and customs and habits of the people. Unfortunately, we often come across teachers who look at the local
population as "uncivilized", "backward", "foolish" etc. With these impressions the teachers treat the children in a very derogatory manner and their slow performances is frequently attributed to their cultural background. This ethnocentrism on the part of the teachers has disturbing effect on the minds of the young tribal students. They consider themselves inferior and this results in a tendency to disown their own cultural values.

A teacher, who stays away from his work place, irregular to the school, not obliged to the local community, and who feels superior of his background often indulging in ethnocentric behaviour utilizing the children for sundry, personal ends and benefits, can never enthuse and attract the local populations toward the school. Nash (1971: 148-149), discussing the place of the school among the Ametango, observes on the role of the teacher that "the innovation potential of village education..... is further hampered by the character of the teacher himself. The teacher and his family are socially isolated from the Indians..... the teacher is alien in the midst of people he does not completely trust. On their side the Amantenageros neither respect nor trust the school teacher ....... He is overbearing, authoritarian and not particularly gentle in his relations with Indians ..... not responsible to the local community".
This pathetic situation is observed at least in one Ashram School, that is, Vondrajola Ashram School. The teachers are not interested to work in the Ashram School. Their families live outside the tribal area. The teachers have no good rapport with the local population. The tribals look at the teachers as aliens living amidst them.

Teaching Facilities

Availability of sufficient teaching facilities is also one of the important components in the teaching-learning process.

The inadequate accommodation for classes is one of the problems in teaching-learning process. If multiple classes are run under the same roof, neither the students nor the teachers can concentrate in their respective tasks. For example in the case of Polla and Sambham Schools, no adequate accommodation is available for running the classes. All the classes are run in a single room.

In the case of all the Ashram Schools, there are no adequate teaching aids. Even the available aids are in condemned condition. It is observed that the teachers are not in the habit of using the teaching aids which are in good condition.
Methods of Teaching

Methods of teaching is one of the essential components in the teaching-learning process. Creating interest among the students in education depends on the methods of teaching. E.V. Rathnaiah (1977: 162) has pointed out that "creating and sustaining interest in formal education in the school among the tribal students mostly depends on the methods and techniques of teaching used by the teachers in the schools".

It is observed that teachers are using only the age old methods of teaching like rote-learning and drilling. Traditional learning in the tribal culture of this area is carried on in an informal manner, and rote-learning and drilling are quite foreign to them. Even sitting for a few hours in a classroom is irksome to the students. L.K. Mahapatra (1967: 116) says that "even sitting for a few hours at a stretch as in a classroom or in a workshop is also irksome, even for the adults".

Tribal children who are reluctant to come to school find greater temptations to run away when period after period they are taught by uninterested topics in one unknown language by an uninterested and dissatisfied teacher.

Maximum use of audio-visual aids should be made in the primary education of the tribal children. While preparing the
materials for audio-visual aids, attention should be given to the traditional forms and designs obtaining among the tribal people.

In respect of methods of teaching the suitability of analytical, synthetic and/or eclectic method should be determined with reference to the configuration of culture of each tribe separately.

Co-Curricular Activities

Tribal communities of this area are fond of dance, music and singing. They also have their games and plays. They participate in hunting and even in archery contests. Besides the general education, the Ashram Schools should encourage the traditional cultural activities of the local tribal communities. One of the aims of the Ashram School is that they should act cultural centres for the local communities.

Unfortunately the cultural activities in the school neither reflect the local tribal culture nor make the pupil familiar with other cultures. The teachers as well as those who administer these schools have no idea at all about this aspect of Ashram Schools.

In the schools there are no separate instructors for games and sports, dance and music. There are no facilities like auditorium and playgrounds for the children to play and participate in other activities.