SUMMARY

The main thrust of this research work has been to explore the quality of schooling available to tribal children in different learning contexts in an educationally backward and predominantly tribal block of Ranchi district. Quality of schooling has been examined in the five primary schools that vary mainly in terms of management, distance from the block headquarters, number of teachers and gender composition of students. Four schools, situated in Arki, Hemron, Lupunghatu, and Bandugada villages, are government schools and are managed by Bihar Education Project (now District Primary Education Programme) and one school situated in Ulihatu village, is under private management of Rastriya Swam Sevak Sangh.

While Hemron and Arki schools are close to the block headquarters, Lupunghatu Bandugada, and Ulihatu are away and are located at a distance of 5.8 and 11 kms. respectively, from Arki. Except Arki girls' school, all are co-educational. Hemron is a single teacher school, Bandugada and Lupunghatu have two teachers in each school and only Arki and Ulihatu has four teachers. This study is situated in the larger context of predominantly tribal villages where people are poor, illiterate and less exposed to mass media.

A major goal of the study has been to analyse the quality schooling. This area became a focus of research since sixties in developed countries like, Britain and USA but the initial phase was dominated by educational production function approach where scholars tried to study quality exploring links between school inputs and outcomes. Later on, analysis saw a shift in emphasis from input variables to process variables. With development of Multi Level Models or hierarchical Linear Models during eighties, there emerged change in methodology to assess magnitude and source of variation in learner achievement. While it was emphasised that school factors more important in prediction of learner achievement in developed world, the home background factors were seen as more crucial in influencing learner achievement in developing countries.
Studies in India have shown that there exists considerable variation in the state and across states in terms of factors that influence learner achievement, particularly in subjects like Mathematics and Language. Scholars since 1990 have tried to trace the school, home and management factors to assess quality of schooling which show that achievement levels of children are generally low and are particularly poor among children belonging to weaker sections of society.

With regard to quality of primary education available to tribal children there is scarcity of research work in India. There is hardly any study that focuses on specific tribal areas where a significant section of educationally deprived Indian children reside. An understanding of the social context of tribal people is important in order to explore linkages between family, community and schools variables that play a vital role in influencing enrolment, retention, discontinuation and achievement among tribal children. Scholars have attempted to relate the poor socio-economic status of family, the gap between home and school, quality of teachers and related factors at a general level to analyse education of tribal children. It is however important to analyse interplay of various factors in different learning contexts within the similar socio-economic and cultural contexts of community and family in specific context.

In the present study, an endeavour has been made to analyse interlinkages between school and home factors and their cumulative impact on enrolment, retention, discontinuation and achievement of tribal children in different learning contexts to assess quality of schooling at micro level in Arki block.

Arki is predominantly a tribal block and different tribal groups like Mundas, Lohras, Bedias, Oraons, Chick Baraiks, and Birhors and found there. The block is poorly served with infrastructural facilities and economically gainful activities. Access to schooling is highly inadequate which is reflected in low literacy among tribals. Tribals of Arki are not homogenous group and there lies social differentiation on the basis of land ownership, educational level and economic status of households. The size of land holding, occupation of father and educational status of parents are found positively correlated not only with enrolment but continuation of children in school and their achievement scores.
It is found that children belonging to families where size of land holdings were 5 acres or above or parents were literate or at least had been to school, have higher percentage of enrolment, low percentage of dropping out and higher achievement scores. In contrast, children belonging to less than 5 acres of land holding families and illiterate parents, show relatively low enrolment, frequent absenteeism, high rate of discontinuation and low scores in the test of Hindi and Mathematics. Occupation of father, particularly if he is engaged in service, is noticed closely associated with achievement scores. Children from such households where heads were engaged in agricultural activities or as labourers, show relatively low scores as compared those who were engaged in non-agricultural activities.

Trends in schooling in terms of enrolment status show that over five years (1992-96) enrolment has increased, but at the same time dropout rate has been relatively consistent. The official figures are found to be full of discrepancies and exaggerations that are belied through study of school registers and records in four government primary schools. Actual dropout rates in one year (1996) and over five years (1992-96) were noticed five times higher than what has been projected by government records. Similarly, low retention rates in one year as well as over five years were recorded in contrast to very high retention rates (85 percent) projected by the official statistics.

Quality of four government primary schools in terms of physical and educational facilities is found poor as there are shortage of classrooms, basic conveniences and basic teaching materials like chalk, dusters and teaching aids. The private school, Ulihatu is relatively better because there are sufficient number of classrooms, better ancillary facilities and regular supply of basic materials required for teaching.

School activities in at least two government schools (Arki and Hemron) are observed relatively less organised because there is not planned allocation of time for programmes to complete official work and teaching activities. In Hemron a single teacher has to manage the official work and teaching alone, but in Arki there were four teachers. In absence of a clear idea about time frame, major activities in school
are seen being carried out in a casual manner. In contrast, in Bandugada school, despite all the constraints, teachers are able to manage teaching in a more effective way as well as complete the usual official tasks before time. In private school, the headmaster and teachers are found relatively more sincere and serious as compared to Lupunghatu, Arki and Hemron schools. Though teachers have low academic qualification (they are just matric), less experience of teaching and no pre or in service training, their performance has been better which is reflected in achievement scores of children.

Broadly there exists three learning contexts in five primary schools of Arki in terms of classroom organisation, teaching learning processes and participation of students. In one context is the single teacher school, Hemron. In Hemron, all the students are housed in one room where chaos and confusion prevails among them. The classroom activities are carried out without planning, order and discipline among students is not properly tackled by the teacher, teaching is done in casual manner and participation of children in learning appears to be minimum as students hardly interact with teacher. In other situation is two teacher school i.e. Bandugada, and the third situation is where four teachers manage students from grade I to V in different classrooms, i.e. Ulihatu.

The variations in learning contexts are seen influencing achievement scores of children in Hindi and Mathematics test. While achievement scores of grade III and V children of Hemron school were recorded low, it was recorded relatively high among Ulihatu and Bandugada school children. Apart from relatively organised school and classroom activities, follow up of timetable, regular checking of homework registers, effective utilization of school time, completion of office works in advance and close link between teachers and students, some innovation in teaching method were observed. In all the five schools, children from Bandugada and Ulihatu had performed better in the tests of Hindi and Mathematics and were at the top of score hierarchy.

The number of teachers was same in the private school Ulihatu and Arki girls' school but there were differences in terms of teaching and management of day-to-day school activities. In Ulihatu, teachers were less paid, educationally less qualified, less
experienced in teaching and were without teaching training, yet they were found more sincere, efficient and somewhat innovative during teaching as compared to Arki teachers who were educationally more qualified, had formal in-service training and more experience of teaching.

The assumption that schools with better physical and educational facilities are likely to provide a better environment for learning was proved to be true up to some extent but the level of student achievement was found to be closely associated with teacher quality. Quality of teacher emerged as an important factor determining school quality in Arki. Quality of teacher was manifested more in the way students are taught and less with educational qualification and the training a teacher had. Classroom organisation was observed dependent upon teacher’s capability, interest, relationship with the headmaster and coordination among different school activities and not on the total number of teachers in school.

Interaction between community and school appeared as one of the vital factors determining achievement of tribal children. In Ulihatu and Bandugada schools, teachers and students were close to each other as at times they were seen interacting in and outside the classroom. Perceptions of teachers and parents were very positive and relationship between the two was informal. Along with other variables, this factor also contributed in relatively high scores of children from Ulihatu and Bandugada as compared to Arki. Hemron and Lupunghatu schools where interaction between teachers, students and parents was formal and minimum.

Factors for dropping out of children are found to be quite complex in nature. Mainly school and home related factors were responsible for discontinuation but their intra and interlinkages showed variation from one situation to another. Broadly, it could be concluded that structural constraints like, poor socio-economic status, illiteracy, work pressure on children (particularly children dropped out from higher grades), socialisation pattern in community, lack of interest among parents as well as children etc. and school related constraints like, medium of instruction, unsuitable timetable, long school hours, etc. were responsible for dropping out. But, any kind of generalisation for all the dropouts and situations is not possible.
About the medium of instruction, teacher competency, teaching-learning processes and attitude of teachers, there are different opinions among the parents and those attending school as well as dropouts. The medium of instruction is Hindi but in empirical situations, only teachers from two schools (Bandugada and Ulihatu) teach in Hindi. In Arki, lower grade students are taught in a combination of Mundari and Hindi, but in Hemron all the children are taught using this combination throughout the primary stage.

While majority of the parents whose children were attending schools advocated that Hindi should be the medium of instruction, only some parents of dropouts favoured it. Similar variations were observed among children also. Though children from Bandugada and Ulihatu had no problem with Hindi, children from Arki, Hemron and Lupunghatu expressed that they would like to be taught in Mundari or a combination of Hindi and Mundari. But almost all the dropouts across the schools were against Hindi as a medium of instruction and favoured Mundari. While all the parents having education up to middle or above were not happy with teaching methods and blamed some teachers for inadequate knowledge of subjects like, mathematics and science, majority of illiterate parents had no problem with teaching methods.

On the issue of homework and punishment, parents and students were found divided. Parents educated up to middle or above felt that some homework is necessary for children to study at home but many parents of those attending school, with primary level education or no education viewed that learning and studying in school is sufficient and there is no need of homework. Some of the parents were not in favour of any kind of physical punishment in school but many were of the opinion that physical punishment is necessary to make children learn in school. Similarly, greater number of those who were attending school were in favour of punishment but for the non-academic reasons, but majority of dropouts were against any kind of punishment in school. Almost all the parents had no problem with teachers' attitude and behaviour towards children but some parents of dropouts from Bandugada were not satisfied and criticised the junior teachers.
Importance of education was perceived differently by the parents. Many literate parents opined that education may help in finding a job or to interact with non-tribal outside Arki. While some viewed that education is the only way to become a teacher or inspector or constable or doctor or an officer, many illiterate parents said that education is necessary to make children capable of writing or reading 'sarakari kagaz' and 'khel ka kagaz' (government papers/land related papers). Many girls rather than boys admitted that education could be helpful in reading, writing and making calculations and said that if they had studied further they could have become teachers.

Parents suggested some ways to improve system of primary education. While educated parents emphasised on quality of teachers, better physical and academic facilities, illiterate and semi-literate parents recommended more incentives to children. Some parents also demanded more number or at least one female teacher in each school.

Development of area, distance from the block headquarters and presence of non-ST population in villages had hardly any influence on enrolment, retention and dropping out of tribal children. All the five primary schools studied were facing the problem of high dropping out and absenteeism. But, in some schools like Hemron, Arki and Lupunghatu the problem was more serious and in schools like Ulhatu and Bandugada it was relatively less acute.

CONCLUSIONS AND EMERGING ISSUES

A number of broad conclusions can be drawn from the present study. While some conclusions tend to reinforce findings of research in the area of tribal education, others point to issues that are of critical concern in the schooling of tribal children.

Socio-economic status of tribal household continues to influence enrolment status.

Considerable variation in enrolment, retention and discontinuation was found along with socio-economic and educational status of parents. If parents are educated and particularly engaged in occupations with regular income, enrolment status is likely to be better. This was reflected not only in enrolment status of children but also
in their achievement scores. While poverty was one of the important factors, the role children played in household economic activities also affected their participation in schooling.

The study also questions the authenticity of official statistics on school participation. In the educationally backward block Arki, an extraordinarily increase in enrolment and decrease in discontinuation rate, as has been projected by the government statistics, was found to be not in consonance with school level ground realities. As shown, enrolment in the five schools studied had neither been exceptionally high nor dropout rates very low.

*Physical and educational facilities in school affect the organisation of classroom activities and thereby school quality.*

Physical and educational facilities in school were found to facilitate organisation of school and classroom activities. For instance, the school boundary, school bell, adequate seating arrangements and so on, aid the teacher in classroom organisation as well as school affairs. All the five schools were observed poorly served with basic items meant for teaching and learning. However, the private school was observed better equipped than government schools and this helped teachers in organising day-to-day activities in classroom in a better manner.

*Constraints arising from poor infrastructure can be overcome to some extent with planned and organised classroom activities, teacher motivation and commitment.*

The government school in Bandugada had poor physical and educational facilities but practices related to classroom organisation and curriculum transaction were observed to be relatively better than in Arki, Hemron and Lupunghatu schools. Major activities of school and classroom affairs in Bandugada were pre-planned and relatively structured. It was largely due to coordination among the teachers and efforts of the junior teacher who was very active, relatively innovative and totally committed to his duties.

Teacher quality emerges as an important factor in determining school quality and children's achievement. However, this is observed to have a positive impact on
children only up to a point. There are limits to the positive effects of teacher quality and commitment on children's participation in school. For instance, despite all the efforts by Bandugada and Ulihatu teachers, dropout rate continued to be high in these two schools, though in comparative terms it was lower than in Arki, Hemron and Lupunghatu schools. Structural constraints relating to the household and parental attitude tended to override teacher related factors. For instance, on market days, all the five schools functioned only for 2 hours (of the stipulated 5 hours) because of non-availability of students in classroom. Tribal children were seen required to accompany their parents to the local 'haat' and hence they did not attend school.

*Teacher qualifications alone do not reflect teacher quality.*

Teacher quality was found positively correlated with the role played by the teacher in planning and management of school affairs in general and classroom practices, in particular. In the present study, the educational qualification and pre and in-service training and teaching experience of teachers bore little relationship with the quality of the learning environment in the classroom. For instance, teachers in the private school in Ulihatu were educationally less qualified, they had no formal training in teaching and their experience as teachers was less than many of the government school teachers. However, Ulihatu teachers were observed to be very active in planning, organisation and implementation of classroom strategies and were more innovative during curriculum transaction as compared to many of the government school teachers.

*Tribal children experience different learning contexts as a result of the interplay of various factors within the school situation. These contexts have a differential impact on the classroom achievement of children.*

Most of the studies on tribal children either fail to focus on classroom situation they are exposed to or assumed that learning environment is homogenous for all children. This study elucidates that tribal children are exposed to a variety of learning contexts. These contexts emerge from interplay of different organisational and process variables within the school in general and classroom in particular.
On the basis of the management of day-to-day affairs inside the school, classroom organisation, curriculum transaction and participation of children, the study highlighted three learning contexts to which tribal children are exposed to. These learning contexts were found to be critically influenced by teacher related factors, in co-ordination and planning of conduction of classroom activities inside the school and classroom. The study suggests that the learning contexts influence the achievement or performance of children.

**Punishment need not be a management strategy in schools.**

With regard to the teacher’s strategy to bring order into the classroom, reinforce habits relating to personal hygiene among children and to ensure children’s participation in learning, two contexts need to be highlighted. One was observed in the private school, Ulihatu and other was in the government school, Bandugada. Teachers in both of these schools were highly committed and sincere. In context of Ulihatu, it was observed that even without physical punishment, children were regular and disciplined. It was seen that they were not penalised for being late to school, or not being in uniform, or if homework was incomplete. In contrast, in Bandugada school, it was observed that children were punished for poor personal hygiene, not being in uniform and for incomplete homework. As seen in the results of the test, achievement scores in Ulihatu children were better than that of Bandugada children. Though different strategies are often adopted by teachers in different situations, the Ulihatu case suggests that punishment need not necessarily be a management strategy.

**There is need for a blurring of boundaries between school, home and community.**

Interaction between school and community had been found influencing local level community participation in primary schools of Arki. In government schools, the participation of local people was minimal as many of the Village Educational Committees were observed to be non-functional. But in the private school, local participation was relatively higher. Local villagers had been contributing in cash or kind to run the school. They also contributed their physical labour during construction of school building.
Interaction between community and school appeared as one of the vital factors determining participation of tribal children in school and their achievement. Where relationship between teachers, students and parents and community was relatively intense, school participation and achievement was recorded better. In Ulihatu and Bandugada schools, the relationship between teachers and students was close. They were seen interacting in and outside the classroom. Perceptions of teachers and parents of one another were positive and the relationship between the two was informal. Along with other variables, this factor also contributed in relatively high scores of children from Ulihatu and Bandugada as compared to Arki, Hemron and Lupunghatu schools where interaction between teachers students and parents was formal and minimal.

Though community participation is emphasised in spread of education among educationally and culturally marginalised groups, it does not emerge merely with the creation of structures like, village education committees. What can be seen especially in Ulihatu, is one role of the school in reaching out involving the local community. This is likely to positively influence children’s achievement.

*Perception of parents and children on classroom practices and the school in general may vary but they offer critical insights on the ground realities.*

Considerable variations were recorded among parents and children regarding the classroom practices, which existed in the five primary schools. Though perceptions and opinions varied across the families and socio-economic and educational categories of parents, some issues appeared as concern of all parents.

Medium of instruction remains an important issue, especially in tribal area schools where children are taught in a language other than their mother tongue. While majority of the parents whose children were attending schools, advocated that Hindi should be the medium of instruction, only some parents of dropouts favoured it. Similar variations were observed among children perspectives also. Though children from Bandugada and Ulihatu had no problem with Hindi, children from Arki, Hemron and Lupunghatu expressed that they would like to be taught in Mundari or a
combination of Hindi and Mundari. But all the dropouts across the schools were against Hindi as a medium of instruction and favoured Mundari.

Perspectives on language that emerge in the study need to be contextualised. For instance, for dropouts the problem of comprehension was a major constraint. On the other hand, for the children who were able to reach higher classes in the primary stage, the problem of comprehension becomes less troublesome as they are able to cope.

While educated parents appear concerned about teaching methods and criticised some teachers for inadequate knowledge of subjects like, Mathematics and Science, majority of illiterate parents had no problem with teaching method. Many parents were also unhappy about punishment given by the teacher to children, while some felt it is necessary.

Teacher attitude to tribal children and their parents did not appear negative according to parents. This could be due to fact that the problem of social distance between the teachers and tribal children had not been reported by parents. However, Bandugada junior teacher was a well appreciated and popular teacher among those who attending school and their parents, he was perceived as strict by dropouts and their parents.

Parental aspiration for education of the children is linked to employment opportunities. The occupations mentioned were teachers, inspectors, constables, doctor or an officer. Illiterate parents were keen that children should capable of writing or reading 'sarkari kagaz' and 'khet ka kagaz' (government papers/land related papers). Many parents perceived that whatsoever the level of education may be, children may be at least be able to write their names instead of putting thumb impression for signature.

Cutting across the socio-economic and educational categories, parents suggested some ways to improve system of primary education. While educated parents emphasised on quality of teachers, better physical and academic facilities, illiterate and semi-literate parents recommended more incentives for children. Parents
were of the opinion that there should be more teachers in school, at least one of whom should be a female.

*Dropout is a complex phenomenon and is the result of the interplay of a variety of factors.*

Dropping out or discontinuation from school is a complex phenomenon that is usually not immediately visible. As seen in the study a large number of children continue to be on the school rolls when they had actually dropped out. It is also a process reflected in irregular attendance of children to school incentives provided to them.

Factors for dropping out of children were found to be quite complex in nature. Mainly school and home related factors were responsible for discontinuation but their intra and interlinkages showed variation from one situation to another. Broadly it could be concluded that structural constraints like, poor socio-economic status, illiteracy, work pressure on children (particularly on dropouts from higher grades), socialisation pattern in community, lack of interest among parents as well as children etc. and school related constraints like, medium of instruction, unsuitable timetable, long school hours, etc. were responsible for dropping out. But, any kind of generalisation for all the dropouts and situations is not possible.

The issue of quality of schooling at the primary perhaps is more critical in the case of tribal children who belong to economically weaker, educationally deprived and culturally marginalised section of Indian Society. In order to explore the dynamics of diversities in learning experiences of tribal children and to contextualise the relationship between school community and family, this study shows need for more research work, that essentially focuses on the specific contexts of tribal people.