
BOOK REVIEW

Itishree Padhi & Rashmi Pramanik (Eds.), *Indigenous Children and Inclusive Education* (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., 2024), pp. 292, Price Rs. 1950/-

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The book “Indigenous Children and Inclusive Education,” edited by Itishree Padhi and Rashmi Pramanik, is a compilation of 24 research papers. In fact, this is a felicitation volume on Professor Deepak Kumar Behera, who was the recipient of the prestigious Sarat Chandra Roy Memorial Gold Medal by the Asiatic Society for his outstanding contribution in the field of cultural anthropology in India. The title of the book attempts to understand the methodological and conceptual issues regarding inclusive education. In the introduction, the editors tie all the papers to the subject.

The title of the book reflects both the primary role of responsible indigenous children to get their scientific education. The title also reflects the need to address issues related to indigenous children within the context of development strategies in contemporary India. It attempts to understand the methodological and conceptual issues regarding inclusive education and literacy.

The compiled papers under review are grouped into four sections: (i) “Education: An Agent of Social Change,” (ii) “Marginalizing the Margins: Deprivation and Disposition,” (iii) “Traditional Versus Modern Tribal Learning” and (iv) “Educational Inclusion and Exclusion: Between Home and School.” Section-wise reviews of the compiled papers are as follows:

Education: An Agent of Social Change

In this section, Satyanarayan Ratha and Itishree Padhi, Anna Maria, and Rezans Krim have contributed their papers on ‘Gandhian Model of Basic Education,’ on ‘Gandhiji’s Nai Tamil,’ and also on ‘Education as an Agent of Social Change from the Perspective of Bangladesh.’ Ratha, Itishree, and Maria recall the education system during Gandhiji’s time. They recall how Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest social and political activist of the 20th century, looked upon education as the basic tool for the development and reconstruction of Indian culture, economy, society, and politics. Karim explains it in the context of Bangladesh.

The paper by Satyanarayan Ratha and Itishree Padhi titled “Rethinking the Gandhian Model of Basic Education for Bharat.” It tells how Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest social and political activist of the twentieth century, looked upon education as the basic tool for the development and reconstitution of Indian culture, economy, society, and politics.

Anna Maria’s paper “Towards a Renewed Framework for Educational Policies and Practices along the lines of Gandhiji’s Nai Tamil” attempts to carry forward Gandhiji’s efforts towards understanding the new mode of education (Nai Talim), which provides the way of a wholistic approach to life.

The paper by Rezaul Karim, “Education as an Agent of Social Change from the Bangladesh Perspective,” describes the role of education as an instrument of social change in the context of Bangladesh. The author describes the changes that have taken place due to the introduction of education at the grassroots in the diverse fields of social life in the geographical settings of Bangladesh.

Marginalising the Margins: Deprivation and Disposition

This section particularly focuses on the educational problem of minority girls in the Nadia district of West Bengal. Similar paper is in the context of poverty and education for the underprivileged children in India. The paper also tries to discuss various developmental schemes initiated by the state government.

Vijoy Sahay’s paper “Marginalising the ‘Margins’: Towards Understanding Social Exclusion and Inclusion in India” is a theoretical analysis of his in-depth research, which vividly analyses social exclusion of marginalised communities in the study area. This section deals with

the role of education, particularly the lowest sections of the population among the marginalised.

“Teaching Barefoot on the Banks of the Kuakhai River: Reflections on Teaching and Learning with Underprivileged Girls at PUSS, Naharkanta, Odisha, India” by Philippa Baylis deals with her personal story of teaching English to destitute girls at PUSS, which runs a residential charity school in Naharkanta village, Bhubaneswar.

Similarly, Samita Manna’s paper “Educational Status of Minority Girls: A Study on Sarv Shiksha Mission in Nadia District, West Bengal” focuses on the educational problem of minority girls and explores the real scenario of the educational status of minority girls in the Nadia District of West Bengal. Jagriti Mehta, Bristy Kalita, and A. K. Sinha’s paper “Underprivileged Children and Education: A Review Study in Indian Context” is a review paper in the context of poverty and education among the underprivileged children of India.

The paper “Globalization and its Impact on the Education of Underprivileged Communities” by Avtar Singh throws light on the educational needs of the lower echelons of our society in an era of globalization in which imparting education in a traditional manner. The paper analyses the effects of globalization on the education of underprivileged children, focusing on children of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Communities. Rashmi Pramanik’s paper “Being a Young Adult Today: A Critical Assessment on the Rights of Children” discusses how an adult gives the child the right to exercise his/her rights and bear obligations. Focusing on inclusive education for Autism in India, the paper discusses how autism disorders are lifelong neuro-development disabilities that onset before 36 months and are characterized by impairments in reciprocal social interactions and in verbal and non-verbal communication skills, stereotyped behaviour, interests and activities, etc. Analysing their childhood problems and education of children of this third gender, the paper also tries to discuss various developmental schemes initiated by the government to educate them and to help them lead normal social lives.

Tradition vs Modern Tribal Learning

This section basically deals with the experiences of the educational system among the tribal children in four tribal villages of Madhya Pradesh. Another paper is based on a qualitative study that throws light on the health, education, and leisure time activities of Kondh children.

The Sabita Acharya is entitled “Primary Education: Issues and Obstacles among the Children of PVTGs of Odisha.” It deals with the problem of primary education among the children of particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) of Odisha. The state of Odisha – where 62 types of S.T. communities, including 13 PVTGs, are living and occupying nearly 23 per cent of the total population of the state, tribal communities, in varying concentrations, are found in almost all districts of the state.

Mehul Chauhan’s paper titled “Education of Tribal Children in Madhya Pradesh” is based upon the field experiences of four villages in the Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh. The paper draws inferences on the possible reasons for children withdrawing themselves from schools. Nibedita Nath’s paper “Kondh Children behind the Hills: A Study in Kolnara Block of Rayagada District, Odisha” was done in Robadi village of Kolnara block, in Rayagada district of Odisha. The paper is based on a qualitative study that throws light on the health, education, contribution to household, and leisure time activities of Kondh children. Abhaya Nayak and Sasmita Nayak’s paper “Educating Santal Children through Santali Language– A Study from a Santal Village of Mayurbhanj District, Odisha” throws light on how the Santals of Odisha have significantly developed their quality of life through education, training, and research.

Vijay Krishna and Pulla Rao’s joint paper, “Policies and Programmes for the Development of Elementary Education among Scheduled Tribes in India,” identifies the necessity of getting into the drawbacks in our educational policies and programmes and rectifying them for achieving the targets set for the population in general and also for the ST population in particular.

Aritra Ghosh’s paper “Child Marriage Practice and Educational Erosion among Tribals in West Bengal” tries to discuss educational and socio-cultural erosion of tribal children in West Bengal. “Can Kodaku Children Dream of Quality Education?” by Alfred Toppo sees the progress of every community through education, keeping its traditions and value system intact.

Educational Inclusion and Exclusion: Between Home and School

The paper by Deepsikha Chowdhar, entitled “Educational Inclusion and Exclusion: Ensuring Rights for Every Child,” takes a broader view of inclusive education as a response to all forms of educational exclusion.

Satyanarayana Kanakala and Vamsi Ravu Sankar Kanakala's paper titled "Educational Disarray and Indigenous Children– Need for Inclusion of Quality Education" tries to show the inadequacies of the education in reaching the underprivileged/ marginalized sections of the society with reference to quality education alone.

Deepak Routray's paper "Impact of Education on Girl Children in Sundergarh District of Odisha– A Statistical Analysis" discusses how education is an essential tool for the development of a society and how education eradicates poverty. Using many educational parameters, the paper tries to see the achievement in girls' education at the district level and tries to draw the attention of researchers, policy-maker, administrators, and educationists to improve it.

Sukriti Chowdhary's paper "Quality Education among Underprivileged Children and Role of NGOs" deals with the role of both government and non-government organisations in providing quality education to underprivileged children in the context of India.

The paper "Privileged or Under-privileged: An Anthropological Study on Secondary School Children from Dual Career Families" by Shreyasi Bhattacharya says how family, the smallest unit in every society, has always been taking the responsibility to bring up and socialize its children and thus make them productive and responsible members of society.

"Development of Primary Education among Scheduled Caste Children in United Andhra Pradesh" by Asharani Panda deals with a comparative study of the general population with the population of Scheduled Caste in relation to the literacy rate and enrollment ratio at the primary education stage in the state of Telangana.

Most of the papers published in this volume are without the philosophical background of education and are placed against the historical backdrop. One cannot disassociate theories from the strategies and development of education because, within an appropriate theoretical framework, such types of compiled books have little meaning. However, the book is a welcome addition to the literature on indigenous children related to education and literacy.