

POLICY BRIEF #2

Can Odisha Learn from Chhattisgarh to Improve the Tribal Education?

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ABOUT

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In December 2021, the Ministry of Science and Technology, Department of Science and Technology (Policy Research Programme) made an open call for the submission of Expressions of Interest in STI Policy Research towards the Establishment of the Center for Policy Research (CPR) by the academic and research Institutes In India. After multiple rounds of consultations and review, the DST-CPR at NISER received the final sanction order from the Government of India, Ministry of Science & Technology, Department of Science & Technology, bearing the letter No DST/PRC/CPR/NISER Bhubaneswar-2023 (G) (PCPM) dated 29/03/2023.

The primary focus of the DST-CPR at NISER is to study the Energy Transition and the secondary focus is to study the Tribal Education, and Innovations for Tribal Education in Eastern India covering Odisha, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

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Can Odisha Learn from Chhattisgarh to Improve the Tribal Education?

Highlights:

- A gap between the overall literacy rate and tribal literacy rate exists in independent India (Figure 1).
- Although Chhattisgarh and Odisha have more or less similar socio-economic status of tribals, Chhattisgarh has outperformed Odisha in terms of tribal education, i.e., dropout rate, gross enrolment rate, and transition rate.
- Schooling structure seems to be the primary reason behind the difference between Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
- The pupil-teacher ratio, representation of ST teachers, school infrastructure, and quality education have also contributed to the reasons.

What is the Issue?

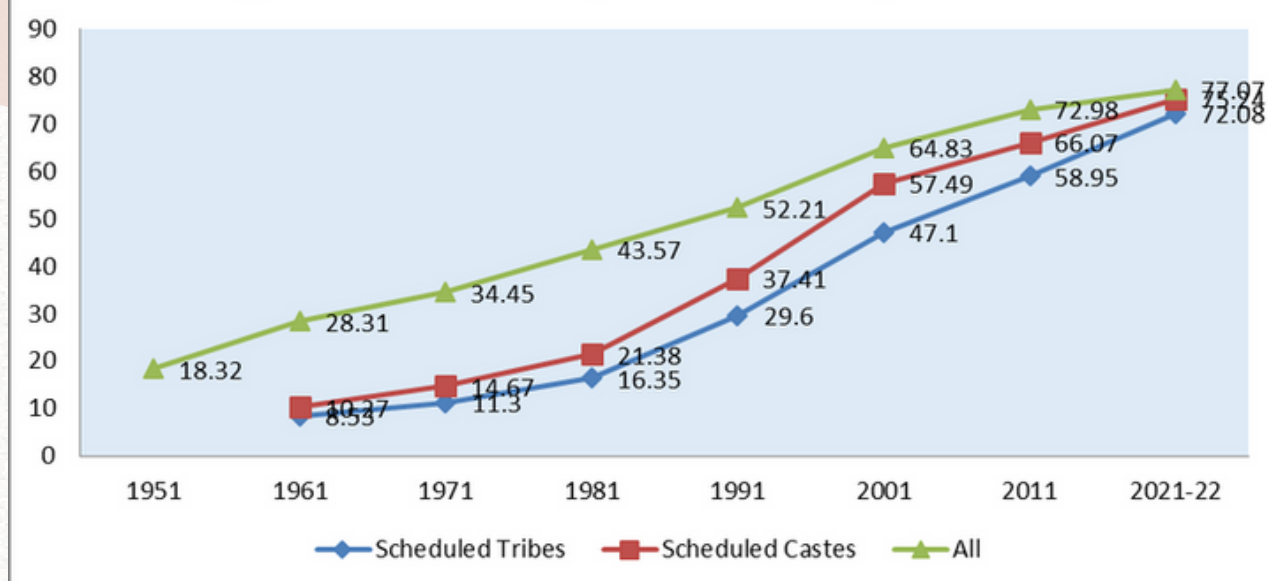
- Among the states with tribal populations, Odisha and Chhattisgarh occupy an important position in tribal demography. In Odisha, the tribals constitute 22.8 per cent of the state population and 9.2 per cent of the tribal population in the country. Moreover, Odisha has the highest number of tribal communities, i.e., 62 in the country and 13 PVTGs.
- On the other hand, Chhattisgarh possesses 7.5 per cent of the country's tribal population, and 30.6 per cent of its population belongs to tribal communities. The number of tribal communities and PVTGs in the state is 31 and 7, respectively (Census of India, 2011).
- Both states have a similar level of income standard (per capita NSDP of Odisha was Rupees 1,01,501, and that of Chhattisgarh was Rupees 1,04,943 in 2020-21) (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2023).
- The literacy rate in Odisha is equal to the national average of 73 per cent, while for Chhattisgarh, it is 70 per cent. However, the tribal literacy in India and both states is much lower than the overall literacy rate.
- Tribal literacy in Odisha, i.e., 52 per cent, is less than that of Chhattisgarh and the national average of tribal literacy, i.e., 59 per cent for both (Census of India, 2011).

- The secondary dropout rate of tribals in Chhattisgarh is 13 per cent, while for Odisha, the figure is 33 per cent.
- The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of tribals in higher secondary education in Chhattisgarh (62.22%) is higher than that of Odisha (38.8%). The low GER among STs indicates that many students are withdrawing from education after matriculation to join the labour force.
- Furthermore, Odisha continues to lag behind Chhattisgarh in the transition from secondary to higher secondary. The tribal students' transition to higher secondary education in Odisha is 40 per cent, while in Chhattisgarh, it is 84 per cent (UDISE+, 2021-22).

What are the reasons?

- The state of Chhattisgarh imparts secondary education and higher secondary education in the same schools, while in Odisha, these two stages of education have been segregated based on school buildings.
- The number of schools that provide secondary and higher secondary education in Chhattisgarh is 4600 (8.14% of the total schools), while in Odisha, the number of such schools is only 539 (0.86% of the total schools).
- The ratio of secondary school and higher secondary school in Odisha is 4.15:1.

Figure 1: Trends in Literacy Rates in Post-Independent India



Sources: Census of India and Periodic Labour Force Survey (2021-22), Notes: Literacy rates for 1951, 1961, and 1971 relate to 5 years and above, while literacy rates for 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011, and 2021-22 relate to 7 years and above. Census data from 1981 excludes Assam, 1991 excludes Jammu & Kashmir, and 2001 excludes Mao Maram, Paomata, and Purul sub-divisions of Senapat district of Manipur as the survey could not be conducted in these regions due to various reasons.

- That is, for 4.15 secondary schools, there is one higher secondary school. The ratio of these two schools in Chhattisgarh is 1.59:1 (UDISE+, 2021-22).
- The large-scale dropout after secondary education is seen among tribal children because the transition process from secondary to higher secondary education appears to be rigid for them. Their transition is affected by four major factors, viz., increase in direct cost, increase in the distance to school, lack of higher secondary schools or seat availability, and adaptability issues (Singha et al., 2013; Pajankar, 2016; Das and Das, 2023).
- The pupil-teacher ratio determines personalised attention and care for every student in the class by the teacher and, thus, the quality of education (Sarin, 2015).
- The Ministry of Education, Government of India has recommended a pupil-teacher ratio of 10:1 for regular primary schools and 15:1 for upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary schools. The pupil-teacher ratio for higher secondary level in Chhattisgarh is 16:1, while in Odisha, it is 35:1.
- In Chhattisgarh, out of 11 districts with a high concentration of tribal population (tribal population of 50% or more), seven have a lower pupil-teacher ratio than the state average, and five have a lower than the ratio recommended by the Ministry of Education. However, in Odisha, the pupil-teacher ratio of the state, as well as the highly tribal concentrated districts, is much higher than the recommended ratio (Figure 2).
- In Chhattisgarh, out of the total primary to higher secondary education teachers, 90 per cent are regular teachers, and in Odisha, 81 per cent.
- The social representation is advocated to address the structural inequality in society. While the enrolment of children from marginalised communities has increased substantially in the education sector, their representation in the teachers still needs to improve. This paradox has been one of the primary reasons for increasing dropout among tribal children in particular and marginalized children in general, as it creates a communication gap between students and teachers and intensifies social discrimination in the school (Vasavi & Mehendale, 2003;

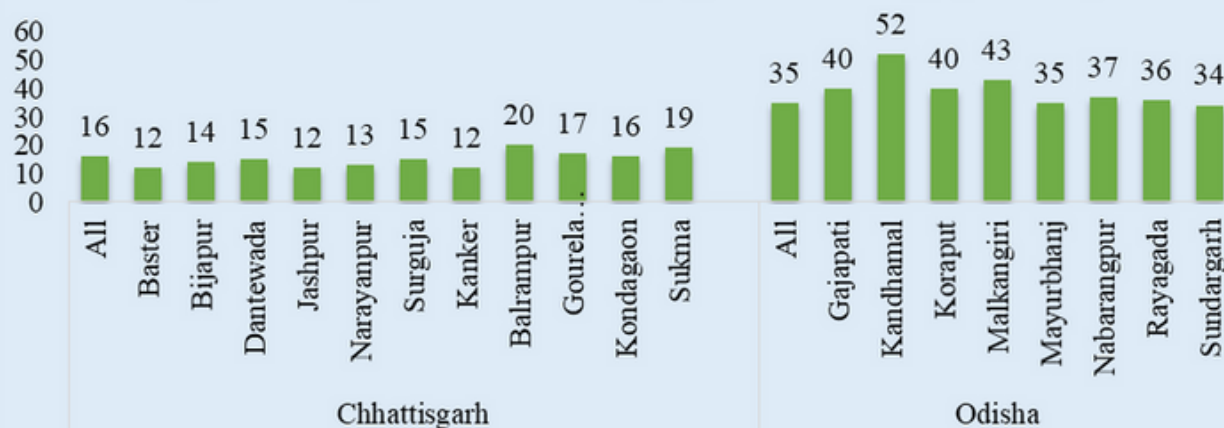
Ekka & Prasad, 2007).

- The tribals constitute 31 per cent of the state population in Chhattisgarh, but their proportion to the total primary to higher secondary level teachers is about 27 per cent.
- Surprisingly, the tribal concentrated districts have better representation of tribal teachers. Of the ten tribal concentrated districts, seven have tribal teacher representation of more than 50 per cent.
- The state of Odisha has an unsatisfactory result regarding tribal teacher representation. Although the tribal population constitutes 23 per cent of the state population, their representation in teachers is only 12 per cent. Moreover, the tribal teacher representation in most of the tribal concentrated districts centres around 20 per cent, which is much lower when compared to the population in the districts (Figure 3).
- The school infrastructure is one of the primary pull factors of school education. The facility available at school not only attracts students but also incentivizes teachers to conduct the teaching process smoothly. Therefore, the availability of school infrastructure and facilities determines the quality of education (Singh & Rama, 2024; Das, 2007).
- In terms of school infrastructure, although both states have improved their status over time, Odisha still lags behind Chhattisgarh.
- For instance, 81 per cent of the schools in

Chhattisgarh have their land; for Odisha, the figure stands at 75 per cent. Similarly, 91 per cent of the schools in Chhattisgarh have functional electricity; in Odisha, 77 per cent of schools have functional electricity. Again, 89 per cent of the schools in Chhattisgarh have a computer facility, while in Odisha, only 26 per cent have this facility.

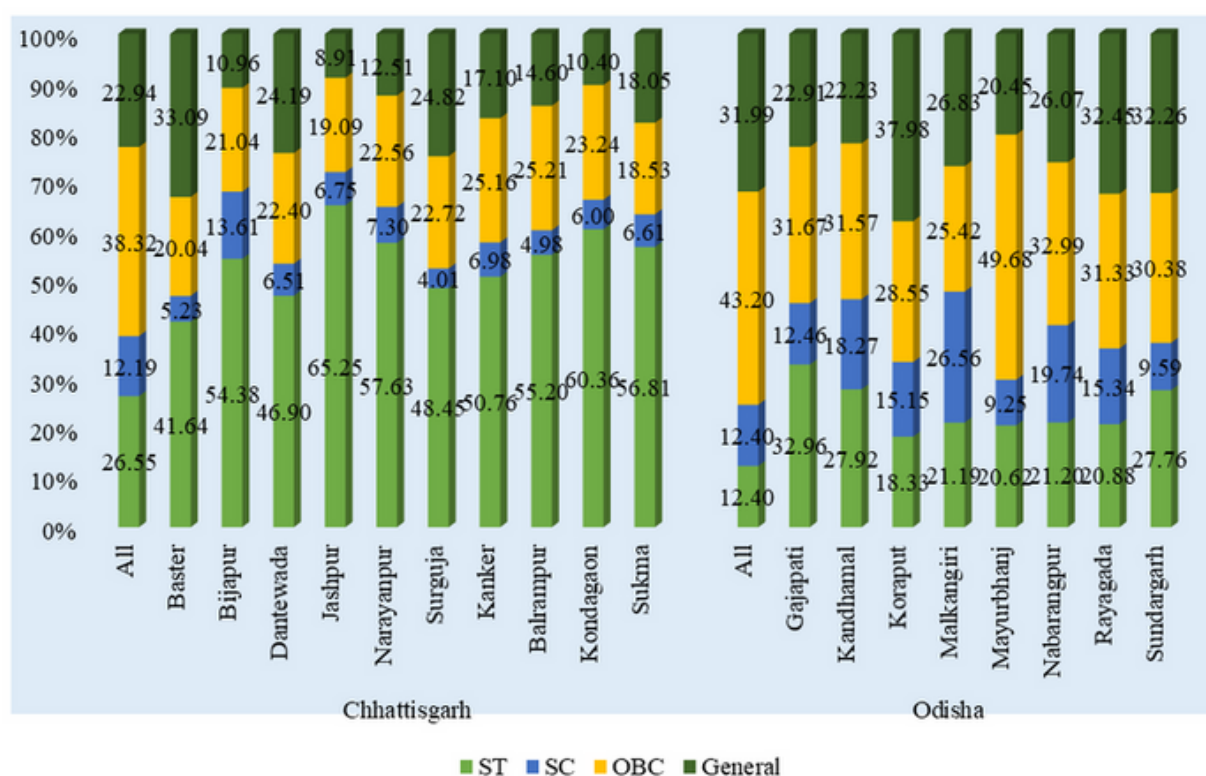
- The tribal concentrated districts have also shown similar patterns, but some are far behind the state average. For example, in Sukma district in Chhattisgarh, 59 per cent, 73 per cent, 35 per cent, 28 per cent, 8 per cent, and 62 per cent of the schools have their land, functional electricity, playground, furniture, internet, and computers, respectively, which are much lower than the state average.
- Similarly, in the district of Koraput in Odisha, 65 per cent, 57 per cent, 47 per cent, 21 per cent, 10 per cent, and 16 per cent of schools have their land, functional electricity, playground, furniture, internet, and computers respectively-much lower than that of the state average (UDISE+, 2021-22).
- In Chhattisgarh, among the children in std VIII, 1.5 per cent cannot read letters, 4.8 per cent can read letters but not words or higher, 3.4 per cent can read words but cannot read std I level text and higher, 7.9 per cent can read std I level text but not std II level text and 82 per cent can read std II level text.

Figure 2: Pupil Teacher Ratio (Higher secondary) (2021-22)



Source: UDISE+ Report (2021-22), Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India

Figure 3: Teachers by social category (2021-22)



Source: UDISE+ Report (2021-22), Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, Government of India (Data of Gourela Pendra Marvahi district is unavailable.)

- In Odisha, among the children from the same class, 1.3 per cent cannot read letters, 4.6 per cent can read letters but not words at a higher level, 6.6 per cent can read words, but not std I level text and higher, 14.1 per cent can read std I level text but not std II text and 73.4 per cent can read std II level text.
- In Chhattisgarh, only 5.2 per cent of the std VIII children depend on paid tuition, while in Odisha, 54 per cent of the std VIII children go for private tuition. Private tuition usually covers mathematics, science, and English, as these subjects are considered problematic, while the mother tongue (literature: Odiya, Hindi) is rarely taught in private tuition centres. Therefore, the children in Odisha perform better in mathematics and English while lagging in reading language (ASER, 2022).
- The growing importance of tuition classes indicates the declining quality of education in public schools.
- The reliance of the education system on private

tuition deprives the tribal children in two ways. Firstly, the tuition class is an urban concept, and it does not exist in rural areas, particularly in remote areas where 90 per cent of the tribal population lives. Secondly, half of the tribal population lives below the poverty line and thus is unable to spend extra money on private tuition classes. So, although the education in tribal regions is of poor quality, they cannot afford and access private tuition classes.

What should policymakers do?

- The government of Odisha needs to increase access to higher secondary schools in the tribal regions by building more classrooms and schools.
- All residential tribal schools should provide continuous education up to the 12th standard.
- The government of Odisha may consider the merger of the Board of Secondary Education and the Council of Higher Secondary Education.
- More and more schools should have continuous education up to 12th standard.

- The pupil-teacher ratio and representation of ST teachers need to be increased as it will increase the quality of education among tribal children by creating a conducive learning environment.
- School infrastructure, particularly in remote areas, is inferior. To improve it, road connectivity needs to be developed first as it will reduce the actual distance between the school and tribal hamlet and will help in the smooth delivery of public service delivery, i.e., education.
- The provision of residential schools should be increased and built faster to minimise dropout and impart quality education in tribal regions. About 73 out of 74 sanctioned Ekalvya Model Residential Schools in Chhattisgarh are functional, while in Odisha, only 32 out of 104 are functional. Odisha and the Central government need to speed up the establishment of EMRS in the state.

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