



OVERCOMING THE EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS OF WAYANAD DISTRICT THROUGH THE SERVICES OF GOTHRABANDHU MENTOR TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Wayanad district, known for its significant tribal population, continues to face educational challenges, particularly among tribal students. The Gothrabandhu mentor teacher program was introduced to bridge this educational gap by providing targeted academic support and guidance to tribal students. This study aims to explore the services rendered by Gothrabandhu mentor teachers and their impact on overcoming educational backwardness in Wayanad. A descriptive survey design was employed, involving 240 mentor teachers, 240 head masters, 16 educational officers, and 100 parents. Data were collected using structured questionnaires.

I am very happy to participate in a seminar on the Indian Knowledge System (IKS). My topic is related to the third area, i.e., holistic well-being and indigenous practices. The education issues of tribal students fall under the subtopic of inclusive education within this area.

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the key educational support service provided by Gothrabandhu Mentor Teachers to tribal students in Wayanad District.
2. To assess the effectiveness of Gothrabandhu Mentor Teachers in addressing the educational challenges faced by tribal students.
3. To explore the impact of the Gothrabandhu Mentor Teacher program on the academic performance and overall development of tribal students in Wayanad.

SAMPLE

Sample distribution for the study as follows

Mentor Teachers	-	240
Headmasters	-	240
Educational Officers	-	16
Parents	-	100

The present study aims to explore the services rendered by Gothrabandhu Mentor Teachers in Wayanad district, focusing on the educational support provided to tribal students. The research follows a descriptive and qualitative data from the identified sample. I.e., Mentor Teachers (240), Headmasters (240), Educational Officers (16), Parents (100).

Data Collection Tools

Questionnaire : A Structured questionnaire is developed for mentor teachers, Headmasters and parents to collect qualitative data regarding the service provided by Gothrabandhu Mentor Teachers and their perceived impact on students.

Interview Schedule

A semi structured interview schedule is designed for educational officers to gain deeper insights into the implementation, challenges and overall effectiveness of the Gothrabandhu Mentor Teachers.

Data Analysis

- Quantitative data collected through the questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts percentage and mean scores.
- Qualitative data obtained from the interview schedule will be analyzed thematically to identify emerging patterns and significant findings related to the educational support provided by mentor teachers for teachers, headmasters and parents along with interview schedules for educational officers.

The findings highlight the key roles played by mentor teachers in enhancing academic performance, reducing dropout rates, and promoting inclusive education practices among tribal students.

The study underscores the effectiveness of the Gothrabandhu initiative in addressing the specific educational needs of tribal communities and suggests strategies for further strengths the programme to ensure sustainable educational development in Wayanad.

Key Factors contributing to the Educational Backwardness

High tribal population

A significant portion of Wayanad's population consist of tribal communities like the Kattunaikka, Paniya, Adiya etc. Many of these communities face challenges such as poverty, illiteracy among parents and lack of access to quality education. Tribal children often encounter language barriers, as their home language differs from the medium of instruction in schools.

Wayanad has a higher percentage of families living below the poverty line. Economic hardship force children to drop out of school early to support their families. The hilly terrain and scattered settlements make access to schools difficult, particularly for students in remote areas. The dropout rate among tribal students is notably high, often due to financial constrains, lack of parental awareness or cultural factors. Malnutrition and related health problems among children impact their learning abilities and regular school attendance.

The role and service of tribal mentor teachers in Wayanad district

Wayanad district known for its lush greenery and rich cultural heritage also faces significant challenges in the field of education, particularly due to its high tribal population. The tribal communities in Wayanad such as Kattunaika, Paniya and Adiya often face barriers that hinder their educational progress, cultural difference, and socio-economic hardships. To address these issues and ensure inclusive education the government has taken a commendable step by announcing tribal mentor teachers known as Gothrabandhu Teachers, for first standard students. These teachers play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between tribal student and mainstream education. In all schools with first standard classes in Wayanad district a tribal mentor teacher has been appointed in addition to the class teachers. Their primary role is to help first standard students to understand the lesson in their tribal language. Additionally they act as facilitators for ensure the attendance of all tribal students in the school.

Tribal Mentor Teacher or Gothrabandhu Teacher Services

1. Additional Teacher in First Standard

The tribal mentor teacher serves as additional teachers in first standard classes, where the foundation of education is laid. This role ensures that the young tribal students receive extra attention and support, which is critical during their initial schooling years, with their presence, these students feel more comfortable and supported in a structured learning environment.

2. Addressing language barriers

One of the primary challenges tribal students face is the language barrier. Most tribal children grow up speaking their native language at home, which often differ significantly from the medium of instructions in schools. Tribal mentor teachers address this issue by translating the lesson taught by the class teacher in to tribal languages. This not only helps the students understand the curriculum better but also builds their confidence and interest in learning.

3. Mentorship and care

These mentor teachers are more than just educators; they act as mentor and guides for tribal students from first standard to tenth standard. Their compassionate approach and understanding of the students' cultural background make them in valuable assets to the schools. They play a key role in bringing irregular students back to schools through their care, love and personal outreach efforts.

4. Understanding cultural practices.

Being from tribal communities themselves or having a deep understanding of tribal cultures, these teachers respect and embrace the cultural practices of their students. This understanding allows them to connect with the students on a deeper level. They also take on leadership roles during cultural events like Gothra fests, fostering pride in tribal heritage among students.

5. Promoting tribal art

Tribal mentor teachers encourage students to participate in various art festivals, such as the school kalolsavam (art festival), sub district Kalolsavam, District Kalolsavam and even the state Kalolsavam. By providing training in tribal arts they ensure that students retain and showcase their traditional artistic skills, which are on integral part of their identity.

6. Encouraging sports participation

Recognizing the importance of physical education these teachers motivates tribal student to participate in sports activities. This not only helps in holistic development of the students but also brings them opportunity to excel in sports and gain recognition at different levels.

7. Prioritizing health and wellbeing

The mentor teacher pays special attention to the health of tribal children. They are proactive in addressing health issues and ensuring that the students are fit to attend school regularly.

They also listen to the mental stress and family problems of students, offering support in their own languages, which fosters trust and emotional well being.

8. Organize Gothra PTA Meeting

To strengthen the bond between schools and tribal communities, the mentor teachers conduct Gothra Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meeting in tribal settlements. These meetings serve as a platform to discuss the student's progress address their study – related challenges, and creative awareness among parents about the importance of education.

9. Parental guidance and support

The mentor teachers' work closely with tribal parents, discussing their children's educational and health related issues. They assist parents in obtaining essential documents such as birth certificates and Aadhar Cards which are often required for assessing scholarships and other benefits.

10. Establishing libraries and Encouraging Reading Habits.

To promote literacy and a love for reading, tribal mentor teachers establish libraries in tribal settlements. They provide news papers and magazines to encourage reading habits among tribal students, and in parents, which helps improve their language skills and general knowledge.

11. Conducting Balasabha for Skill Development

Balasabha sessions are organized in classrooms to encourage tribal students to showcase their talents in arts and other capabilities. These sessions provide a platform for self – expression and help build confidence among students.

12. Assisting in Teaching – Learning Materials

The mentor teacher assist class teachers in preparing teaching – learning materials that are culturally relevant and engaging for tribal students. This collaboration ensures that the curriculum is accessible and relatable to the students.

13. Helping Students Achieve Scholarships and Grants.

By guiding tribal students through the process of applying for scholarship and grant these teachers open door to financial aid that can support their education. This support is crucial in reducing the financial burden on tribal families and preventing dropouts.

CONCLUSION

The role of tribal mentor teacher of 1st Standard in Wayanad District is nothing short of transformative by addressing the unique challenges faced by tribal students; these teachers not only facilitate their academic success but also nurture their cultural heritage and personal growth. Their efforts contribute significantly to reducing dropout rates, improving attendance, and fostering a positive attitude towards education among tribal communities.

These teachers are not just educators but also role models, mentors and change – makers who bring most marginalized sections of society. Their work underscores the importance of inclusive and culturally sensitive education in creating a more equitable and empowered future for Wayanad tribal population.