



A DISTRICT LEVEL ANALYSIS ON DISPARITY IN LITERACY RATE AMONG THE SCHEDULED TRIBE AND NON-SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION IN WEST BENGAL

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Abstract

Literacy rate is one of the most important indicators for measuring social development. The magnitude of socio-economic progress of any region is computed by literacy rate and level of education of that particular region. In the last few decades India has witnessed improvement in literacy rate however it also experienced disparity in the pattern of literacy rate among the scheduled tribe and non-scheduled tribe population. Despite the free and compulsory education for the children upto the age of 14, difference in terms of socio-economic condition among various social groups become an obstacle for implementation of right to education to the deprived sections of the society. The increase in literacy rate in West Bengal has also taken place unevenly with respect to the social groups. Even within the same segments of population, diverse socio-economic condition creates a difference in literacy rate. Therefore the present study is an attempt in mapping out the regional disparity in literacy rate among the scheduled tribe and non-scheduled tribe population at district level in West Bengal based on the data from Census, 2011. The output of the study will help to identify the problematic districts which have high disparity in literacy rate among the tribal and non-tribal population so that new strategies can be developed to minimize the disparity.

Keywords: Literacy rate, Disparity, Scheduled tribe, Non-scheduled tribe population.

Introduction

Literacy is considered as one of the prime indicators for socio-economic progress of an individual or any group or community in a region as a whole. It helps to acquire a higher social status through the process of social mobility. On the other hand illiteracy indicates socio-economic backwardness. In India the definition of literacy varies across several sources. According to the National Literacy Mission, literacy means not only learning how to read, write and count but also helping people understand why they are deprived and helping them move towards a better future. According to Census of India, any person aged seven and above and has the ability to read and write with understanding in any language is considered as literate. As per the 2011 census, literacy rate of India stands at 74.04% which has improved significantly over the last decade. In the 2001 census the country's literacy rate was 64.8%. But the average values of literacy rate (of any region) are often misleading due to the presence of disparities within rural-urban area, gender and various social categories.

Disparity in the literacy rate among various social groups is one of the major hindrances to the educational as well as overall development of India. The scheduled tribe population exhibits the lowest literacy rate among the various social categories present in India. Several efforts have been made by both the central and various state governments to eradicate social disparity in literacy rate. Therefore it is high time to analyse whether disparity still exists among the scheduled tribe and non-scheduled tribe