

PROBLEMS IN TRIBAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The tribal communities are found throughout the country. They are primarily residing in hilly and mountainous regions. They are dependent upon the natural environmental conditions for the sustenance of their living conditions. The main objective of this research paper is to acquire an understanding of tribal education. In tribal communities, the system of education is not in a well-developed state. Though they have recognized the significance of education and are migrating to urban communities to pursue education. There is a need to formulate measures and programs that are necessary to bring about improvements in tribal education. In tribal education, there is a need to bring about improvements in teaching-learning methods, infrastructure, facilities, amenities and the overall environmental conditions of the educational institutions. Apart from acquisition of education, it is essential for the tribal communities to generate awareness in terms of modern and innovative methods to enhance their overall quality of lives. The main areas that have been taken into account in this research paper are, Constitution and tribal education, challenges experienced by tribal students in acquisition of education, and measures to enhance tribal education.

Keywords: Culture, Challenges, Community, Learning Materials, Tribal Education

For promoting effective growth and development of the country, it is necessary to put emphasis upon the impartment of basic literacy skills among tribal students. Traditionally tribal communities are referred to as adivasis. They constitute about nine percent of the population of India. Despite the diversities in their community culture, history, norms, values and practices, and non-tribal relationships with the adivasi world, approximately 87 million Indians come under the adivasi population. In India, tribal communities are found mostly in the states of Mizoram, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and West Bengal. The system of education among tribal communities has undergone transformations. Major emphasis has been put upon primary education through the formulation of measures, programs and strategies. Furthermore, training programs have been initiated for teachers, as they are ones, who render an effective contribution in impartment of educational skills among individuals (Bagai, & Nundy, 2009).

The tribal communities are found in hilly areas and depend upon the environmental conditions

for the sustenance of their living conditions. In tribal communities the system of education is not in a well-developed state. The school buildings are in a dilapidated state, the infrastructural facilities, civic amenities and teaching-learning materials are not adequately available, there are shortage of teachers and the teaching-learning methods and instructional strategies are also not put into operation in an appropriate manner. But tribal communities have also recognized the significance of education. They are migrating to other regions and cities to pursue education. Research has indicated that tribal communities are implementing various measures to enhance their living conditions. They are acquiring higher educational qualifications, selecting various fields, such as, education, medical, engineering, law, management, administration and so forth and are engaged in reputed employment opportunities as well. Hence, with developments taking place, tribal communities are also alleviating seclusion from the mainstream society and promoting better livelihoods opportunities for themselves.

CONSTITUTION AND TRIBAL EDUCATION

In the post-independent India, initiatives were undertaken to promote development of tribal communities. The Government of India formulated a policy that aimed to promote well-being and up-gradation of the socio-economic status of tribal communities. The enhancement of the system of tribal education has been one of the major responsibilities of the Government. The framers of the Constitution have provided certain rights and benefits to the tribes. The measures and policies formulated have aimed at alleviating the state of backwardness and seclusion and enabling them to become the part of the mainstream society. Article 45 of the Constitution is more specific regarding obligation of the state. The state is directed to make provision of free and compulsory education to the children, belonging to the age group of six to fourteen years (Akula, 2013). The Right to Education Act, which was implemented in 2009 stated that all children, belonging to the age group of six to fourteen years have the right to free and compulsory education.

Article 46 of the Constitution directs to promote special education and economic interests of the economically weaker sections of the society, particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Apart from the Constitutional provisions, the major basis of the educational policy of India are various committees and commissions that are appointed. Within the course of time, improvements and changes take place within the system of education. In order to cope up with these changes, there is a need to bring about reformations in the system of education. In accordance to the new educational policy, there are establishment of ashram schools for the students, belonging to tribal communities. Apart from ashram schools, there are also establishment of anganwadi centres, non-formal and adult education centres (Akula, 2013). The major objective of these educational institutions is to make provision of educational skills to the tribal population, so they are able to promote better livelihoods opportunities.

Though there have been number of developments towards the augmentation of the education system in tribal communities, but the tribal individuals are experiencing setbacks. There

are number of problems and challenges that are overwhelming tribal communities, these are, poverty, illiteracy and deprivation. Due to the occurrence of problems, they remain in a secluded and backward state. The tribal communities have their own traditions, customs, cultures, norms and values, on the basis of which they carry out their daily life routine. One of the major problems that the tribal communities experience is the problem of language. Due to differences in language, it is difficult to communicate with the tribal population. In schools too, the tribal students are unable to communicate nor acquire an efficient understanding of the academic concepts and the primary cause of this are the differences in language (Akula, 2013). Therefore, to provide solutions to this problem, it is necessary to put into practice the measures and policies to promote enrichment of the system of education. When the teachers and students, belong to same communities and speak same language, then learning can be facilitated in a better way.

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY TRIBAL STUDENTS IN ACQUISITION OF EDUCATION

The major challenges that are experienced by tribal students in acquisition of education have been stated as follows:

Financial Problems – Finances are regarded to be of utmost significance within the course of implementation of various tasks and activities. Within the course of acquisition of education, financial problems are regarded as major barriers. The tribal communities are regarded as poverty stricken and most exploited (Mukherjee, 2009). In acquisition of education, the individuals are required to meet number of expenses. These are related to obtaining textbooks, stationary items, uniforms, bags, transportation costs and learning materials. The tribal individuals are usually residing in the conditions of poverty and backwardness. Agriculture, hunting and fishing are their primary occupations. Income generated is used to sustain their living conditions. Therefore, due to financial problems, the parents encourage their children to get engaged in income-generating activities. In this manner, as a result of financial problems, the tribal

students experience challenges within the course of acquisition of education.

Management of Household Responsibilities – In tribal communities, the children are usually involved in the management of household responsibilities. They assist their parents in various household chores. The girls are the ones, who are contributing a significant part in the management of household responsibilities. These include, fetching water, cleaning, washing, preparation of meals, rearing of livestock and looking after younger siblings. The other activities in which, children are encouraged to participate are, agricultural activities and collection of forest products. The tribal communities are dependent upon the environmental conditions to a major extent. They collect medicinal herbs from the forests to treat their illnesses and health problems. The other activities that they are engaged in include, hunting, gathering, fishing and so forth. They encourage their children to collect wood from the forests to light their stoves for preparation of meals. Therefore, when children are encouraged to participate in management of household responsibilities, they are unable to attend schools.

Less Parental Support in Academic Learning – Within the course of academic learning, students need support and assistance from not only individuals within schools, such as, teachers and fellow students, but also parents. In the completion of homework assignments and in preparing students for tests or exams, parents render a significant contribution. It is the responsibility of the parents to ensure that their children do not experience any problems or challenges within the course of attainment of academic goals. In tribal communities, the support of parents is negligible. Research has indicated that they usually recognize the significance of education and aspire to get their children enrolled in schools. But due to lack of literacy skills, they are unable to support their children in academic learning. The tribal children are unable to acquire support from their parents in the implementation of academic assignments. This is regarded as one of the major challenges within the course of acquisition of education.

Low Levels of Motivation – It is essential for students to possess interest, enthusiasm and high

levels of motivation, particularly within the course of attainment of academic goals. Tribal students usually possess low levels of motivation (Rani, 2007). The primary causes are, lack of efficient understanding of academic concepts, learning disabilities, unavailability of learning materials, lack of infrastructure and other facilities and lack of support from parents, particularly in academic learning. In other words, they lack the sources that are essential in achieving academic goals. When they are unable to understand academic concepts, it is apparent that they are unable to generate good outcomes in assignments or tests. As a result of setbacks, they experience low levels of motivation. Low levels of motivation are regarded as the major impediments within the course of achievement of academic goals. As a consequence, the students either experience low academic performance or drop out from schools, before their educational skills are honed.

Language and Culture Differences – Language and culture are regarded as significant barriers that tribal students experience within the course of acquisition of education (Rani, 2007). They have their own cultures, traditions, norms, values and principles, upon which their livelihood opportunities are based. Furthermore, they also speak different languages. Research has indicated that due to differences in language, they experience problems in establishing effective communication terms with teachers as well as fellow students. These differences also become major impediments within the course of understanding academic concepts and achievement of goals and objectives. It is apparent that when students will experience problems and challenges in communicating with other individuals, then certainly they would be unable to understand the concepts. On the other hand, due to differences in cultures, they are unable to adapt to other cultures, norms and principles. Therefore, these factors prove to be major barriers within the course of acquisition of education.

Unsatisfactory Teaching-Learning Methods – In schools in tribal communities, the teaching-learning methods are either not adequately available or the ones that are utilized are not in accordance to the academic requirements of students. It is apparent that when adequate teaching-

learning methods would not be put into practice, then certainly students will experience problems within the course of acquisition of academic concepts. The major factors that lead to unsatisfactory teaching-learning methods are, the curriculum content is inappropriate and medium of instruction takes place in language, which is not known to the tribal children. In this manner, a social distance is established between the teachers and students. The teachers are unable to understand the academic requirements of the students and students too are unable to communicate effectively with the teachers in terms of their problems and concerns. Therefore, it is necessary to put into operation the teaching-learning methods in accordance to the needs and requirements of students.

Lack of Facilities and Amenities – In tribal schools, there are lack of facilities and amenities. The major facilities that are necessary to enhance the system of education are, appropriate teaching-learning materials, technologies, furniture, heating and cooling equipment in accordance to the weather conditions, clean drinking water, restrooms, library facilities, laboratory facilities, playgrounds, extra-curricular and creative activities and other materials that are essential to carry out the job duties in an appropriate manner. These facilities and amenities are not in a well-developed state in tribal schools. Hence, this has proved to be a major challenge within the course of acquisition of education. Research has indicated that due to lack of facilities and amenities, all members of the schools, teachers, staff members and students experience problems within the course of implementation of job duties. The students are unable to concentrate upon their studies and receive unsatisfactory academic outcomes. As a result, there is an increase in the drop-out rate of students as well.

Lack of Learning Materials – Learning materials are regarded to be of utmost significance to acquire understanding of academic concepts and achieve academic goals. They are the ones that impart knowledge and information among students regarding various aspects and concepts. These include, textbooks, technologies, internet, diagrams, charts, models, posters and other reading materials. The tribal students experience lack of learning materials. Due to their conditions of poverty and

lack of financial resources, they are unable to obtain sufficient learning materials. Research has indicated that when they are to work on an assignment and do not have proper learning materials, they experience problems and challenges within the course of acquisition of education. Hence, it is essential for the students to obtain satisfactory learning materials. It is the job duty of the school authorities to ensure that libraries are well-equipped with books, learning materials and technologies and laboratories too should contain proper equipment. These are vital to promote student learning in a well-organized manner.

Participation in Income-Generating Activities – The tribal communities normally are residing in the conditions of poverty and backwardness. They have the major objective of generating income for sustaining their living conditions in an appropriate manner. The primary income-generating activities that tribal communities are engaged in are, agriculture and farming practices and production of food items, handicrafts, artworks and so forth. The individuals usually encourage their children to participate in income-generating activities. The children, particularly girls are encouraged to assist their parents in the agricultural sector, farming practices and production processes. After the completion of production processes, the individuals have to market their products. Therefore, in most cases, children both girls and boys are encouraged to migrate to even other regions and cities to market their products. They need to generate awareness in terms of marketing strategies and demand of products. Hence, when children are required to assist their parents in income-generating activities, they experience challenges within the course of acquisition of education.

Health Problems – As it has been stated that tribal communities depend upon the natural environmental conditions for their survival. In case of any health problems, or illnesses, they obtain medicinal herbs and plants from the forests. The tribal communities adopt traditional methods and are unaware of modern and advanced medical and health care treatment. In their environmental conditions, they do not have access to medical or health care centres. Health problems experienced by tribal children are regarded as major impediments

within the course of acquisition of education. The primary causes of the occurrence of health problems are their engagement in manual occupations, especially collecting fire wood and other items from the forests, lack of nutritious diet, and other psychological problems. The problems and challenges that they experience within the course of acquisition of education cause psychological problems, such as, depression and stress. Therefore, physical as well as psychological health problems gives rise to challenges in acquisition of education.

MEASURES TO ENHANCE TRIBAL EDUCATION

Scheduled tribes are geographically isolated and economically marginalized communities. In the post-independence period, efforts were made to upgrade the status of tribal communities. Despite the efforts made, the participation of the Scheduled tribes in the system of education is much lower as compared to Scheduled castes. Education is one of the essential requirements for promoting well-being of the individuals and leading to overall progression of communities and country as a whole. In India, there are number of individuals and communities, who are still deprived of educational qualifications. Due to this, they experience setbacks in enriching their overall quality of lives. These are the tribal communities. It is necessary to formulate measures to enhance the system of tribal education (Brahmanandam, & Babu, 2016).

In accordance to the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986, the proportion of the enrolment of students, belonging to Scheduled Tribe communities was found to be much less as compared to their proportion of population. At all levels of education the drop-out rate of students was high (Chapter – I. Introductory, n.d.). The major factors that lead to an increase in the drop-out of students from schools are, financial problems, learning disabilities, lack of interest in studies, lack of extra-curricular and creative activities in school, shortage of teachers, inappropriate teaching-learning methods, inappropriate environmental conditions within schools, lack of infrastructure and amenities, lack of teaching resources and the overall system of education was deficient in the formulation of proper

procedures, measures, policies and programs. The drop-out rate was high among girls as compared to boys. Therefore, with the acquisition of information regarding increase in the drop-out rate among students, there is a need to bring about developments in the overall system of education among tribal communities. The various areas that need to be taken into consideration to enhance the system of education among tribal communities are stated as follows:

Making Provision of Financial Assistance

– There has been an increase in the drop-out rate among tribal students due to lack of financial resources. The financial resources are regarded to be of utmost significance in the acquisition of education. In Government schools, even though education is provided free of cost, but individuals are required to spend financial resources on other items, such as, books, stationary, uniforms, school bags, learning materials, transportation and so forth. Lack of financial resources are regarded as major impediments within the course of acquisition of education. To eliminate this problem, it is necessary for schools to make provision of financial assistance to the students. Making provision of financial assistance is not possible to all students, especially when schools possess limited financial resources. Therefore, financial assistance is provided to the students on the basis of their performance. Meritorious performance of the students and achievement of good grades in tests are important aspects that enable the students to acquire financial assistance. Normally, students are required to take tests, which determine how much financial assistance would be obtained. It is usually made in the form of scholarships. It has been researched that with the acquisition of financial assistance, students are able to meet all educational expenses in an appropriate manner.

Utilising Appropriate Teaching-Learning Methods

– The teaching-learning methods need to be put into operation efficaciously. When the teachers are implementing them, they need to take into account, mainly three factors. These are, academic goals, grade levels of students and subjects. They need to be put into practice in a well-organized manner that they should facilitate in the achievement of academic goals. The major

academic goals are to promote effective growth and development of students, augment the overall system of education and promote amiable environmental conditions with all the facilities and amenities. The grade-levels of students matter to a major extent. For instance, in pre-schools, the teachers may impart knowledge among them through verbal explanation and give them practice exercises. Whereas, in secondary and senior secondary schools, they need to implement advanced teaching methods, promote group projects and conduct tests on regular basis. The subjects are crucial factors that determine the teaching-learning methods. For instance, in case of English and Hindi lesson plans, teachers usually provide verbal explanation and give notes. Whereas, in mathematics, explanations of the concepts is provided on the black-boards and students take down notes. In schools, in tribal communities, measures need to be initiated to bring about improvements in teaching-learning methods.

Utilising Appropriate Teaching-Learning Materials – In schools in tribal communities, teaching-learning materials are not in a well-developed state. The teaching-learning materials are referred to as the resources that are utilized to impart knowledge and understanding among students regarding the academic subjects. The common teaching-learning materials that are used in schools are textbooks, blackboards, notebooks, stationary items, charts, posters, models, diagrams, pictures, images, and other reading materials. In the present existence, technologies are regarded indispensable. The teachers and students have formed this viewpoint that it is imperative to make use of technologies to enhance the system of education. The use of internet has enabled the individuals to generate awareness and augment their understanding in terms of various aspects, concepts and fields. Schools in urban communities are making use of these teaching-learning methods on a comprehensive scale. But in tribal communities, there are scarcity of these materials. The ones that are used are also not in a well-developed state. The underdevelopment of teaching-learning materials are regarded as major barriers within the course of acquisition of education. Therefore, it can be stated that to bring about developments in the system of

education, it is essential to pay attention towards the implementation of teaching-learning materials.

Provision of Infrastructure and Amenities – In schools, it is indispensable to pay attention towards infrastructure and amenities. The improvements made in these aspects helps in promoting an amiable and pleasant environmental conditions. Infrastructure primarily is referred to the furniture, materials, tools, equipment and resources that are needed to promote effective environmental conditions. For instance, within the classrooms, it is necessary to provide proper furniture, heating and cooling equipment in accordance to the weather conditions and proper instructional materials to enhance the concentration of students towards learning. Whereas, amenities are referred to electricity, lighting, clean drinking water, restrooms and so forth. The students and other members of the schools, normally spend six to seven hours in schools. Hence, promoting developments of the infrastructural facilities is regarded as indispensable. There has been an increase in the drop-out rate of students and other individuals have also expressed unwillingness in attaining employment opportunities in tribal schools, due to lack of infrastructure and amenities. Sufficient amount of financial resources needs to be spent upon the development of these aspects. It is apparent that in schools, when there will be provision of adequate infrastructure and amenities, the teachers, staff members and students will feel contented, pleasurable and motivated towards the implementation of their job duties.

Overcoming Shortage of Teachers – The teachers are the ones, who are vested with the job duties of imparting knowledge and information to the students not only in terms of academic concepts, but also in terms of morality and ethics. It is one of the job objectives of the teachers to carry out their job duties in a well-organized manner to promote effective growth and development of students. In tribal schools, there is shortage of teachers. The main reason of shortage of teachers is, the system of education is not in a well-developed state and there are occurrence of problems and challenges within the course of implementation of job duties. Therefore, individuals express reluctance and prefer to obtain teaching positions in schools, where the

infrastructural facilities, amenities and the overall environmental conditions are in a well-developed state. Hence, to increase the number of well-qualified, competent and experienced teachers, it is necessary to make provision of various facilities and amenities. This would lead to augmentation of feeling of job satisfaction among them as well. Furthermore, all individuals aspire to obtain well-paid jobs. In tribal schools, teachers are not well-paid. Hence, they aspire to migrate to other regions and cities to look for better employment opportunities.

Promoting Extra-Curricular and Creative Activities – In schools, making provision of extra-curricular and creative activities are regarded important. The participation of students in these activities have proven to be beneficial in number of ways. Their mind-sets gets stimulated, they feel motivated towards studies, they are able to hone creative skills and abilities and when they develop keen interest, they can even make selection of one of the activities as a career. The various forms of extra-curricular and creative activities that are taught in schools are, sports, physical activities, dance, music, artworks, handicrafts, debates, role plays, personality development and so forth. In tribal schools, these activities are either lacking or they are not in a well-developed state. Research has indicated that due to lack of these activities, students do not develop interest and motivation to attend schools and drop-out before their educational skills are honed. On the other hand, when they participate in extra-curricular and creative activities, they are able to hone their skills. Tribal communities are also engaged in the production of artworks and handicrafts. Hence, skills in terms of manufacturing of artworks and handicrafts are augmented by acquiring training. In schools, when individuals acquire training regarding sports, they may even take up sports as careers. Hence, participation in extra-curricular and creative activities have proven to be beneficial to students in number of ways.

Organization of Workshops – Academic learning is not easy and individuals are required to experience various problems and challenges. In urban schools, there are organization of seminars, which may be productive and advantageous to the individuals in augmenting their learning and in

overcoming academic problems. In tribal schools, research has indicated that students experience learning disabilities. In most cases, students enrolled in class six are unable to read class four textbooks, they experience problems in solving simple arithmetic problems, are not able to communicate with confidence and experience setbacks within the course of achievement of academic goals. These factors are regarded as detrimental within the course of achievement of educational goals and to promote enhancement of the overall system of education. To provide solutions to these problems, it is vital to organize workshops. The primary objective of the workshops is to impart efficient knowledge and information to the students regarding the concepts. They are organized on the basis of a topic or concept. Usually, workshops are organized in schools regarding the topics and concepts, which students find difficult to learn. The schools are required to spend considerable amount of financial resources. In workshops in some cases, educators and professionals are even invited from other schools.

Organization of Events and Competitions – In schools, the organization of events and competitions assist in promoting participation opportunities among students. The competitions are meant to conduct an analysis of the skills and abilities of students. These are organized regarding various subjects as well as extra-curricular and creative activities. When the competitions are to be organized, students are provided with adequate information and are assisted by their teachers regarding augmentation of skills. Before competitions, students are required to prepare themselves well. In tribal schools, students are not encouraged to participate in events and competitions. Therefore, to enhance the system of tribal education, it is necessary to organize events and competitions. When the students participate in events and competitions, they are usually rewarded on the basis of their performance. When they are rewarded, they feel contented and pleasurable and are able to enhance their skills and abilities. In some cases, participation in competitions may enable students to feel vulnerable and apprehensive. But when they regularly participate, they are able to overcome vulnerability and apprehensiveness and develop confidence. In some cases, students are allowed to make decisions on their own to

participate in competitions, whereas, in other cases, they are encouraged to participate in competitions and events.

Promoting Means of Transportation – The tribal students normally discontinue their studies and feel discouraged towards acquisition of education, due to lack of adequate transportation. The tribal communities are scattered in hilly, mountainous regions and forests. In most cases, schools are located at a distance. Hence, it is indispensable to develop means of transportation. To attend schools on a regular basis and maintain ones attendance rate, it is vital to bring about developments in the means of transportation. When the students are young, it is the responsibility of the parents to take them to schools and bring them back home. Normally in tribal communities, individuals are engaged in agriculture and farming practices and they also need to manage the household responsibilities and take care of the needs and requirements of the elderly family members. Therefore, due to these factors, they are unable to take out time to take their children to schools. Whereas, older students normally manage their transportation on their own. But to increase the enrolment and retention rate among students, it is vital for schools to make provision of means of transportation. Buses are regarded as adequate means of transportation, which would take students to schools and back home.

Formation of Amiable Environmental Conditions – In tribal schools, the environmental conditions are not amiable and pleasant. The school buildings, playgrounds, classrooms and the overall environmental conditions are not encouraging. The teachers, staff members and students do not feel comfortable and undergo problems within the course of implementation of job duties. Due to lack of equipment and technologies, the individuals experience problems and challenges in the implementation of administrative and managerial job duties. There are certain aspects that need to be taken into consideration in the formation of amiable environmental conditions. These are, making provision of proper civic amenities, such as, electricity, lighting, heating and cooling equipment in accordance to the weather conditions, restrooms, and clean drinking water. Technologies need to be made use of, as various tasks and activities can be

carried out in a well-organized manner. Furthermore, improvements need to be made in the library facilities, laboratory facilities, playgrounds, buildings, classroom conditions and overall environmental conditions. Formation of amiable environmental conditions would render an effective contribution in augmenting the system of tribal education.

CONCLUSION

Education is regarded as an important instrument that needs to be acquired by all individuals, belonging to various communities, categories and backgrounds. Tribal communities are the communities that are residing in hilly and mountainous regions. They are engaged in agriculture, hunting and fishing for the sustenance of their livelihoods. The system of education in tribal communities is not in a well-developed state. The members of the schools are required to experience number of problems and challenges within the course of implementation of their job duties. The major challenges that are experienced by tribal students in acquisition of education are, financial problems, management of household responsibilities, less parental support in academic learning, low levels of motivation, language and culture differences, unsatisfactory teaching-learning methods, lack of facilities and amenities, lack of learning materials, participation in income-generating activities, and health problems. Programs and policies have been initiated by the Government of India to bring about changes and developments in the system of tribal education.

Apart from the introduction of programs and schemes, such as, Right to Education Act in 2009, there are formulation of other measures as well to enhance the system of tribal education. These are, making provision of financial assistance, utilising appropriate teaching-learning methods, utilising appropriate teaching-learning materials, provision of infrastructure and amenities, overcoming shortage of teachers, promoting extra-curricular and creative activities, organization of workshops, organization of events and competitions, promoting means of transportation and formation of amiable environmental conditions. These aspects are regarded as indispensable in leading to enrichment

of the overall system of tribal education, and in facilitating the achievement of professional and personal goals for all members of the schools. It is crucial for the principals, teachers and other staff members within the schools and the community leaders to pay adequate attention towards development of the system of tribal education to promote well-being of the individuals, communities and the nation.

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