Project Update: Tribal Education Methodology (TEM)

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Tribal Education Methodology (TEM) is designed to have a meaningful intervention into tribal education and state curriculum of Kerala. Unlike earlier initiatives that promoted alternative educational models that ran parallel to the State curriculum, TEM attempts to integrate the tribal arts, culture, oral traditions of knowledge to restructure the state school curriculum. The activities of the project are aimed at lessen the gap in scientific research in the field to empower tribal pedagogy as a tool for decolonising the education for transformative learning. The District of Wayanad has five Model Residential Schools (MRS) for tribal young learners and all the activities of the project are initiated in all MRS.

Tribal Education Methodology Workshop

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TEM initiated the following activities:

https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk/2020/07/24/project-update-tribal-education-methodology-tem/

· Digital documentation of the tribal oral traditions to create a tribal museum and digital archive in Wayanad, which is first of this kind in the State. Documentation is undertaken by the Department of Tribal Sociology, University of Kannur, Kerala.

· Making the School campus tribal friendly through three distinctive activities:

o Memory landscape: it is eco restoration of the School campus and the activity is led by Anita Sharma, the leading environmental activist in Kerala. Each TEM youth learner plants a tree in the school campus that is brought from the tribal hamlet. A tree which they like the most and has a memory associated with it making the campus a memory landscape.

o Story telling walls: it is a tribal Art workshop led by the leading painter, Sajitha Sankar. TEM youth learners paint the school walls with stories and myths they collected from their community and neighbourhood to make the school walls telling stories that they want to hear.

o Bamboo theatre and community gathering: parents and community visit the MRS to watch the TEM theatre activities developing close relationship between community and tribal education. Intergenerational cultural exchange becomes the central focus of the activity.

· TEM Toolkit for an inclusive curriculum is under development that will help the tribal youth to complete secondary education.

· The process of the consultation with the Education authorities of the state is already began for a potential integration of the Toolkit in the State curriculum.

Story telling walls.

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TEM has implemented the following supporting structure:

1. TEM Educators at MRS level: a TEM teacher-coordinator from each MRS is identified to co-ordinate the project activities at the school level. A WhatsApp group has been created for the TEM teacher-coordinators and they have regular contacts with each other to communicate the activities in their own school. This platform helps better coordination, understanding and trust amongst TEM educators.

2. TEM Resource group: the group consists of TEM teacher-coordinators, educational experts, tribal activists, cultural activists, theatre persons and writers. TEM resource group advises on project activities and creation of the TEM Toolkit.

3. Project Implementation Team at District level: The team consists of members from the District Education Department and Scheduled Tribes Development Departments. Chaired by the District Collector, a Civil Servant and the Head of District Administration, the TEM implementation committee include the Deputy Director of Education, as Vice-chair; the District officer of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) a Department in the Government of Kerala addressing the issues of school drop outs amongst tribal youth; members from the District Institute for educational training (DIET); the Project Officer of Integrated tribal development project (ITDP), the state system to address tribal development. A. Shajahan, the Secretary of Education, Kerala State overseas the District level implementation of the TEM activities.

4. TEM Advisory Committee: the TEM advisory committee consists of policy makers Scholars and artists such as S.M. Vijayanand, former Chief-Secretary, Government of Kerala; V.N. Jithendran, former Director, Social Justice, Government of Kerala (convenor); Dr K. M Abraham, Chairperson, K-DISC; Dr. Muhammed Asheel, Executive Director, Kerala State Social Security Mission; Dr. Gita Gopal, Honorary Advisor, K-DISC; Dr. P.V. Unnikrishnan, Strategic Advisor, K-DISC; Dr. P. Pugazhendi, Director, Scheduled Tribes Development Department, Government of Kerala; K. Jeevan Babu, Director Of Public Instruction, Government of Kerala; Sivaraj T, Director of Uravu, Indigenous Science and technology Centre (NGO); Civic Chandran, Writer and Social activist; Methil Devika, Artist; , Veena Naregal, Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, New Delhi

The first advisory committee meetings was Chaired by Alna Ajith, a year nine student from the tribal Model Residential School (MRS), Kaniyampatta.

5. The Project Team: the TEM Project team consists of Dr. Sreenath Nair (PI), Senior Lecturer, University of Lincoln, UK; Dr. Seetha Kakkoth (Co-I), Assistant Professor, Department of Tribal Sociology, Kannur University; P. Hareendran, Assistant Professor, Department of Tribal Sociology, Kannur University; Usha P.E, Project Manager; Babu Raj, M, Project Coordinator; Rose Maria Joseph, Research Assistant; Parvathi Menon, Research Assistant.

TEM & COVID-19

COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent emergency lockdown in Kerala has made serious disruptions of the TEM project activities in the region. The TEM team is currently working on emergency mitigation measures to reduce the effect of lockdown, on tribal youth and their families at the pedagogical, socioeconomic and mental wellbeing levels. Currently, TEM youth learners are back in their homes in the tribal hamlets under the lockdown protocol implemented by the Government of Kerala. The General Education Department offers regular lessons during the lockdown through the national television channel (DD4) and the Victers Live streaming, but the majority of the tribal homes have no electricity and internet connectivity. As a result, majority of the TEM youth learners are out of education during the lockdown period. Working with the TEM teacher-coordinators in Wayanad to mitigate the present situation, the TEM project team has identified the following concerns and issues that need an immediate action plan:

· Lack of internet connectivity and lack of technological capital both in terms of soft-ware and hardware, causing lack of engagement to education and leadership among TEM youth learners.

· Unemployment hit the region more than ever during the lockdown causing parents out of work leading to poverty among youth learners in tribal communities.

· Lack of safeguarding measures affecting the safety of the girl teenage learners: teenage pregnancy and child marriage can be increased during the lockdown period.

TAGS: ARTS BAMBOO THEATRE COVID-19 EDUCATION HUMANITIES INDIA KERALA MEMORY RESEARCH STORYTELLING