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FUNCTIONING OF EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF TIPA SCHOOL, SAIHA DISTRICT, MIZORAM

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ABSTRACT
The study focused on the functioning and infrastructural amenities in EMRS of Tipa, Mizoram. It encompasses the various management and infrastructural factors which are pre-requisite for a school to function for the welfare of the teachers and students. The study also highlighted the enrollment, dropout and pass out rates of the school under study and the importance of not only recruiting trained teachers but also retention of the teachers to reduce dropout rates of students. Though the school is well equipped in terms of infrastructural facilities, the students have no access to computer and internet connectivity and there is lack of funds for students to participate in non- academic activities. An inference drawn from the study is that the policy makers must revisit the existing guidelines of EMRS for the improvement of the school not only in the study area but also for the country at large.
KEYWORDS: *EMRS, Tipa, infrastructure, enrollment, dropout, pass out*

INTRODUCTION

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)started in the year 1997-98 to impart quality education to ST children in remote areas in order to enable them to avail of opportunities in high and professional educational courses and get employment in various sectors. The schools focus not only on academic education but on the all-round development of the students. Each school has a capacity of 480 students, catering to students from Class VI to XII. Hitherto, grants were given for construction of schools and recurring expenses to the State Governments under Grants under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched the scheme of 'Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS)' for classes VI to XII during 1997-1998 under Article 275(1) of the Indian Constitution on the pattern of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya. Till date, 197 EMRSs have been sanctioned by the Ministry in various parts of the county, out of which, 129 EMRSs are fully functional and the remaining 68 EMRSs are under construction. At present around 8 EMRS are in operational in Mizoram.

In order to give further impetus to EMRS, it has been decided that by the year 2022, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an EMRS. Eklavya schools will be on par with NavodayaVidyalaya and will have special facilities for preserving local art and culture besides providing training in sports and skill development. Across the country, as per census 2011 figures, there are 564 such sub-districts out of which there is an EMRS in 102 sub-districts. Thus, 462 new schools have to be opened by the year 2022. With these, currently Mizoram has 17 EMRS and Lunglei EMRS is the first EMRS established in Mizoram. These 17 EMRS cover all the remote Tribal areas within Mizoram for the development of Tribal Education and their career guidance and development as well.

EMRS has vision of catalyzing socio-economic development of the most underprivileged groups in India i.e. the Scheduled Tribes (STs), in a coordinated and a planned manner considering it as an effective instrument for their holistic empowerment. EMRS has mission for imparting quality education to ST children by establishment of Eklavya Model Residential Schools in order to enable them to avail high and professional educational courses and to get employment in various sectors. EMRS will ensure them opportunities at par with non-ST populations thereby providing impetus to the overall development of tribal population in the country.

Objectives of EMRS

The objective of EMRS is to provide quality middle and high-level education to Scheduled Tribes (ST) students in remote areas, not only to enable them to avail of reservation in high and professional educational courses and as jobs in government and public and private sectors but also to have access to the best opportunities in education at par with the non-ST population. This would be achieved by:

1. Comprehensive physical, mental and socially relevant development of all students enrolled in each and every EMRS. Students will be empowered to be change agent, beginning in their school, in their homes, in their village and finally in a large context.
2. Focus differentially on the educational support to be made available to those in Standards XI to X, so that their distinctive needs can be met,
3. Support the annual running expenses in a manner that offers reasonable remuneration to the staff and upkeep of the facilities.

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4. Support the construction of infrastructure that provides education, physical, environmental and cultural needs of student life.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Majority of the tribal children in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha fight to get access to the schools devoted for them, and those who succeed in receiving access, failed to get quality education. Different agencies and government committees planned various ways for improving access in these schools. (Jojo, 2013). The expansion of spreading education was achieved over time by opening more tribal schools like Ashram Schools, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, building residentials for students, but attention was not given on the improvement of tribal education by introducing remedial classes, counselling, and vocational education. These schools failed to deliver impartial quality education as per the requirements of the tribal students. The provisions for the education of tribal children through various schemes and policies have proved to be inadequate in addressing their educational requirements. The running of schools in tribal areas is under serious threats (Jojo, 2013). A study about the condition of education in tribal areas in Maharashtra (CBPS, 2017) cited that there is a need to boost educational opportunities and requirements for the tribal pupils, not only in terms of physical infrastructure or financial provisions but more delicately and inclusively, without disaggregating planning across the states in India. It argues that a systematic and rational approach is the need of the hour to address the poor educational outcomes of the tribal people.

Students' achievements do not reflect their socio-economic background, it mainly depends on their aptitudes and skills. Therefore, an impartial school system is fundamentally one where all the learners can reap their full potentials, regardless of their socio-economic background (Harris et.al, 2019). In schools and society where the level of challenges is intense and the jeopardy to equality of opportunities are quite significant, leading for equality is more than just a theme. Instructional headship in this setting implies that the heads' efforts should focus on student's academic advancement to improve their outcomes and the importance of refining classroom teachings. (Day, 2016). Educational plans and evaluation of the quality of teachers and their teaching should be transparent. Whereas, Shatzer (2014) highlighted that the formation of the school ethos and vision for improving the quality of education are the need of the hour for the overall alteration of schools towards a philosophy of inclusiveness in education.

Moswela et.al (2019) stated that leadership in school administration is at the apex of a more effective management and plays a pivotal role in managing and supervising the proper working of the school in order to provide better education to the pupils. It is not viable to consider school administration without heads yet gives orders and directs the organization just to keep the organizations to function. They concluded that school headship is the second most vital factor that can influence the students after classroom teaching (Fritz et.al, 2003). Good governance in education denotes the whole academia, administration, and executive systems where the stakeholders must design and implement good practices. Teaching and non-teaching staff must collaborate and interact to come up with new ideas for the smooth function of the schools. Leadership alone will not suffice to create a good work environment (Mythili, 2019). Since authority flows from the school levels to the state government levels, respecting good practices and developments and solid cooperation among the school, district and state will bring about changes in the area which will further have an indirect effect on the people for their welfare. Three indispensable features that define the substance of good governance was mentioned by Bareth (2004). First, the people must be freely and actively participated people in the decision-making process without anyone being discriminated at all the levels of governance systems; secondly, good governance favored the welfare of the people, particularly the vulnerable and socially disadvantaged section of the society, and thirdly, it works to implement positive changes in the society.

Superfluous emphasis on monetary resources supervision has somehow resulted in overlooking other important factors within the organization that affect the role of leadership at all levels. Very often, the leaders at the district levels lack the required skills to implement plans and supervise the schools. The guidelines of the Central Ministry are being sightlessly followed by the various authorities of the district and local education bureaus, which has resulted in a blurred picture when it comes to the authority and their responsibilities (Chapman, 2000). The primary tasks of the middle levels of the Central Ministry are to inform policy matters and program to schools, provide data and other necessary information from the schools to the ministry while monitoring that these schools are enduring government policies. These middle level lacks authority to decide and acts on the data available. Moreover, inspections of the schools are usually performed by workers who does not possess the necessary qualifications and lack moral ethics. General appointments through simple examinations does little improvements in their work ethics especially if they did not undergo specialized training
(Sharma, 2000).

Equality in terms of education is defined as raising the achievement level of all the students while lessening these achievement gaps between the highest and lowest performing pupils and removing ethnic and other disparities that exist amongst them. (Singleton et.al, 2006). The role of the heads significantly affects how delicate their schools are to students for the deprived backgrounds (Stanovich et.al, 1998; Gardiner et.al, 2006). However, there are differences in the opinions of the heads in understanding equality issues in education and the strategies they adopt to make an inclusive environment in their schools.

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Majority of the school leaders stated that, they did not undergo equality training during their pre-service training (Gardiner et.al, 2006; Zaretsky et.al, 2008) Another important issue is that principals are expected to create an inclusive work environment while also redefining the responsibilities of their employees. To increase equality among the students, various strategies must be employed by taking into account the cultural background of each student. Principals or heads of the school are directly involved in order to maintain equity among the staff and students so as to enhance a healthy relationship in their schools (Ross et.al, 2009).

AREA OF THE STUDY

Mizoram is one of the States of North East India, with Aizawl as its capital city. In addition to the existing 8 districts prior to 2019, the Government of Mizoram by notification enabled the functioning of 3 new districts in the year 2019. Accordingly, administrative jurisdiction, notified towns and villages pertaining to these 3 districts had been chalked out. Saiha District is one of the eleven districts of Mizoram state in India. The district occupies an area of 1399.9 km^2. Saiha town is the administrative headquarters of the Mara Autonomous District Council. Tipa (also known as Tuipang) is a town located in this district and in this town, the EMR school under study is established in the year 2020.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the status and functioning of Tipa Eklavya Model Residential School.
2. To evaluate the infrastructural facilities available in the school.
3. To analyze the enrollment, drop out and pass out trends during the study period.
4. To suggest measures for strengthening the EMRS program and draw implications for policy makers on the education of tribal children.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does the school infrastructure support access to computer and internet connectivity for enhancing students' digital skills?
2. Does the school have recreational facilities for students to enhances their talents other than academic excellence?
3. Does the school practice gender equity in terms of enrollment?
4. What is/are the main push factors for dropouts?

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary data. A structured questionnaire was prepared to capture the management, functioning and infrastructural facilities of the EMR school in Tipa for the periods of 2020-2023. Secondary sources were also obtained from various journals, books and other relevant e-resources. The data collected were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The role of headship plays a crucial role in the overall development of schools. Next to classroom teaching, it is an equally important factor that can influence students' progress directly and indirectly. Several research studies have drawn a conclusion that for equality viewpoints in general and for the marginalized in particular, school headship plays a pivotal role in enabling the school facilities available to all students to meet their individual levels of learning. On the other hand, the authority's role at all levels also plays an influential part in monitoring schools' tactical directions, executing plans and policies, and giving advices on the various challenges of the schools. The functioning of Tipa school from the perspective of the principal is presented below.

Table 1: Functioning of Tipa EMR School on Selected Indicators-I

Sl.	ITEMS	Yes	No
1.	Availability of course content separately for the school		√
2.	Inclusions of local relevant curriculum		√
3.	Availability of school academic calendar	√	
4.	Students' daily routine is arranged in a systematic order as per the requirement of the students	√	
5.	Sufficient number of teaching and non-teaching staffs		√
6.	Participated in the recruitment process of teaching and non-teaching staff	√	
7.	Financial problem in running the school properly		√
8.	Involved in the admission process of the school	√	
9.	Teachers are permitted to be engaged for tuition class		√
10.	Remedial classes/ extra classes for students	√	
11.	Parent's Teacher meeting	√	
12.	Satisfied with the school campus	√	
13.	Morning assembly for students	√	

Source: Field Survey, 2024

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As presented in Table 1 above, the school under study did not have a separate course content for their school, they are following the pattern of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). The local related issues are not included in their curriculum design. The school followed the academic calendar prescribed for them and they prepared the daily routines for each class depending upon the requirement of the students. The principal is involved in the admission process of the students and also played an active role in the recruitments of the teaching and non-teaching staff but the number of teachers and staff are highly inadequate to meet the demand of the students and the school itself. The funds available for the smooth functioning of the school is rather limited and this factor is the major challenge faced by them. The teachers are not permitted to give tuition to the students over and above the number of teaching hours assigned to them though they are permitted to offer remedial classes. Parents and teachers' interaction are held at regular intervals and students' morning assemblies are conducted every working day.

Table 2: Functioning of Tipa EMR School on Selected Indicators-II

Sl.	ITEMS	Yes	No	
1	Rewards to Meritorious students	√		
2	Practise gender equity	√		
3	Purchase of teaching- Aids	√		
4	Emphasis on activity-based learning	√		
5	Allocated of enough funds for field trips and projects		√	
6	Teachers evaluate class notes regularly	√		
7	Conduct of assessment or tests frequently	√		
8	Opportunity to teaching and non-teaching staff for professional development	√		
9	Separate time slots for students to access computers		√	
10	Allocated of funds for participation in school/national level sports meet		√	
11	Opportunities to students to expose to school-level curricular competitions	√		
12	Organising science exhibitions in the school		√	
13	National and state festivals celebration	√		
14	Are there regular interactions between you and the hostel superintendents?	√		

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Rewards to meritorious students is a way to inspire good behaviors and inculcate competitive essence among the students. They are often used to recognize hard work and academic excellence. The EMR school of Tipa is practicing this activity every year and they also teaches and practice gender equity in the school to empowered both boys and girls in promoting equal developments in acquiring life skills. The use of teaching aids can facilitate the learning process of the students by making the process less time consuming and interesting, the school under study often purchased teaching aids that enables the students to use their hearing and seeing abilities thereby improving their learning potentials. As presented in the Table above, the principal stated that though activity-based learning is promoted in the school, the funds availability for students' field trips and projects is rather limited. In view of the importance of field trips and project works in promoting critical thinking and enhancing their observational skills, more funds must be allotted for field trips and projects. The teachers examine the class notes of each student, conduct class tests frequently and the teachers are given the opportunities to enhance their professional development by undergoing various training programmes. Computers are pivotal especially for students to acquire digital skills in the modern world, it is not just an advantage but a necessity for their personal growth and development. But the school does not devote time for students to access computers, this is an important area where there is a scope for improvement of the school. The students do not participate in the national or state levels sports meet due to the non-availability of funds for this purpose, they are exposed to school levels curriculum competitions only and they have never conducted science exhibitions in their school. They do observe and celebrates state and national festivals. There is a decent teamwork between the principal and the hostel wardens/ supervisors for the welfare of the students. Students and parents often ponder upon the infrastructure of the school as one of the main factors when selecting a school for admission. School infrastructure encompasses all the physical units and facilities the school offers. Education exclusively depends on the course design, teachers, and methods of learning, but a mentally motivating, peaceful and reassuring environment also plays a vital role in students' growth academically**.** Good school infrastructure must offer a favorable environment for students to be comfortable, feel safe, and focus on learning by taking into account all the resources and amenities for students. The following Tables 3, 4, and 5 shows the infrastructural facilities of the Tipa EMR School.

Table 3: Infrastructure of the School -I

Sl	Items	Available			Not Available
		Good	Manageable	Poor	
1	Principal Room	√			
2	Staff Common Room	√			
3	Office Room	√			
4	Classrooms	√			
5	Visitor's Room				√
6	Science	√			

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	Laboratories				
7	Computer Laboratories				√
8	Internet connectivity in the computer room				√
9	Library	√			
10	Availability of books in the library	√			
11	Toilet facilities	√			
12	Drinking water Facilities	√			

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In Table 3, it can be seen that the school have different rooms for the principal, staff, office and science laboratories but not visitors' room. There is lack of computer laboratory and no internet connectivity. The school have a library and it is furnished with books of different kinds for the readings of the students. Toilets and drinking water facilities are in good conditions. It can be stated that since computer laboratories in schools are an indispensable resource to foster students learning and development and develop their technological skills, the school must have such laboratories which will not only prepare them for technical career but also for the digital world we live in. Furthermore, computer laboratories without internet connectivity would be meaningless, it plays a vital role in education as it contains a wealth of knowledge that will help the students to re-learn the curriculum taught in the school and also enable them to access information for their everyday lives.

Table 4: Infrastructure of the School -II

Sl	Items	Available			Not Available
		Good	Manageable	Poor	
1	School Bus facility				√
2	Emergency Fire exits	√			
3	Fire extinguishers	√			
4	Indoor stadium				√
5	Playground	√			
6	Fans in the classrooms	√			
7	First aid facilities	√			
8	Campus security guard				√
9	Store room	√			
10	Sports goods	√			
11	Learning aids	√			
12	Recreational room				√

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above i.e., Table 4 shows that the school under study have no transportation facilities for students. This is acceptable since the school is a residential school and that all the students reside within the campus. The school have fire extinguishers for emergency fire outbreak, they also have a playground for the students to assemble and perform outdoor activities. Fans are fitted in all the classrooms; variety of learning aids are available and they also have a store room where school materials are being stored. At the same time, there is an absence of indoor stadium where students can perform different indoor sports and there is no recreational room for the students and the teachers. The school does not have security personnel for the safety of the school and the students. An inference that can be drawn from Table 4 is that, the school must provide an indoor sport stadium to enable students to relieve themselves from the monotonic academic exercises and enhance their sporting skills and availability of indoor stadium can give a chance to discover talents other than academic excellence. Moreover, the school must provide recreational room for students to enhances their peer-relationships and inter-personal skills. Furthermore, schools are meant to be safe for learning environment, but this might be not possible for the students without security measures put into place. Availability of security guards can offer the school the protection it needs while not interfering with the children's education.

Table 5: Infrastructure of the School -III

Sl	Items	Available			Not Available
		Good	Manageable	Poor	
1	Blackboard /whiteboard	√			
2	Condition of tables and chairs	√			
3	Well-ventilated classrooms	√			
4	Presence of nurse	√			
5	Teaching staff quarters	√			
6	Ramps in the school	√			

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	for the disabled				
7	Conditions of paths linking the buildings		√		
8	Road connectivity of staff quarters via classrooms		√		
9	Campus environment and it's building construction	√			
10	Conditions of building roof	√			
11	Are there any types of facility for the visually impaired students?				√

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 presented that the school's writing boards such as whiteboards and blackboards are in good conditions and that the classrooms are well ventilated. There is a health care provider, a nurse in the school to treat students' ailments during the school hours. The school provided residential quarters for the teaching staff and there are disabled-friendly ramps in the school. The roads that connect the school and the staff quarter are barely manageable, there is a scope for improvement of the road's connectivity within the school campus. The campus itself is environmentally friendly and the roofs of the buildings are in good conditions. Though the school under study is well furnished from different angles, there is no facility for visually impaired children, this parameter alone highlighted the fact that the school is not feasible for visually impaired tribal children. The visually impaired children have the same rights with their counterparts i.e., the non-impaired, the authority of the school must take this matter into account to accommodate the visually impaired children and thereby promoting equity in the functioning of the school.

One of the ripple effects of the stifling competition for education institutes is the growing necessity for schools to enhance their mechanisms for better serving applicant's queries and objections. The debate about the effects of school size has a long history. Larger-school advocates contend that they allow for more varied curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Smaller school promoters argue that large schools allow students to fall through the cracks, whereas small schools promote more personal attention for students. School size is one potential measure of school quality over which policymakers have some control (Gershenson & Langbein, 2015). Numerous studies, reviewed by Andrews et al., 2002; Cotton, 1996 and Leithwood and Jantzi, 2009 have investigated the relationship between school size and academic achievement. Lee, et al., (2000) intheir qualitative study of small and large schools, documented that student in small schools reported generally higher levels of support and caring among the members of their school communities. New investigation designates that smaller schools have greater student success, better attendance and contribution in school actions confident interactions between students, instructors and parents. More current studies suggest that small schools are well than large ones, particularly for students with lessersocio-economic position. There are countless references, conference papers and journal articles illuminating the merits of small schools (Schneider, 2002). (Akerlof &Kranton, 2002) argued that students in small schools' benefit by being better able to identify with the school and with each other. Class size is viewed as an enabler of more effective instruction that can improve student learning (Konstantopoulos & Sun, 2014). Based on the evidences of these reviews, the following table for enrollment in Tipa EMRS is formed.

Table 6: Enrollment in Tipa EMRS

Class	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
VI	15	15	15	15	9	7
VII	15	15	15	15	8	13
VIII	15	15	15	15	12	12
IX	15	15	09	11	12	12
X					8	9

Source: Field Survey, 2024

In the above table, it can be seen that since its inception, the school has been enrolling 30 students each in all classes, i.e., class 6 to 9 with 15 boys and 15 girls in every academic year. The total enrollment in 2020-2021 is 120 students, 120 students in 2021-2022 and 150 students in 2022-2023. The enrollment increases in the third year due to the introduction of class 10 in the school. The school is planning to introduce classes 11 to 12 in the near future and this is hope to increase the enrollment rates. The drop outs during the same period under study is presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7:Dropouts in Tipa EMRS

Class	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
VI	15	15	15	15	15	15
VII	15	15	15	15	15	15
VIII	15	15	15	15	15	15
IX	15	15	15	15	15	15
X	-	-	-	-	15	15

Source: Field Survey, 2024

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From the dropouts table presented above, it can be seen that 2 students dropped out from class 6 in 2023 due to their health conditions. During the academic year of 2022-2023, 4 boys dropped out from class 10. The main reason behind these dropouts is that majority of the qualified teachers left the school for better employment opportunities and the principal hired teachers on temporary basis and the students who have dropped out could not follow the teaching methods of these hired teachers. A conclusion that can be drawn here is that retaining teachers in the EMRS must be looked into and incentives for the teachers must be enhanced. This will come a long way in not only retaining the teachers but also the students.

Table 8: Numbers of Pass Out Students

Class	2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
VI	-	-	-	-	1	1
VII	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIII	-	-	-	-	-	-
IX	-	-	-	-	-	-
X	-	-	-	-	4	-

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 8 shows the number of students who succeeded in each class during the study period. In class 6, all students passed in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, but in the academic year of 2022-2023, 6 boys and 8 girls failed in this class. In class 7, for the two consecutive years of 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, all students succeeded but in 2022-2023, 7 boys and 2 girls failed. In class 8, in the year 2022-2023, 3 boys and 3 girls were unsuccessful. In class 9, 100 percent succeeded in the first academic year under study, but 6 boys and 4 girls failed in the second academic year and 3 boys and 3 girls were also unsuccessful in the third academic year. 8 boys and 9 girls thrived in the board examination of class 10 in 2022-2023. The main reason behind why some students were unsuccessful is due to the fact that they lack proficiency in English, which hinders their learning capabilities not only in this particular subject but in other subjects as well. A recommendation that can be made here is that, the school must recruit teachers who have skills in enhancing the learning potential of the students especially in English language. Even if the school have to hire temporary teachers, let the hired teachers be trained teachers who qualified Central Teacher Eligibility Test (CTET) as far as possible.

CONCLUSION

School infrastructure is one of the pivotal parameters that can enhance students' enrollments to achieve the educational objectives and goals. The provision of infrastructural facilities can create a productive and environmentally friendly campus. The Tipa EMR school have a scope for further improvement in terms of developing their infrastructure and the policy makers must revisit the framework and guidelines of the EMRS in order to facilitate and promote the educational rights of tribal students not only in Mizoram but also in India as a whole.

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