

from a dentist-centered system towards a community-centered system so that primary causes of poor oral health among children can be recognised in a timely manner. Rather than focusing on disease management, a

prevention-oriented primary care model of oral health must be considered to achieve good overall health and well-being of our children.

Experts View

Tribal Education: What We Think - What They Need

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Early childhood is the most significant milestone of mental and emotional growth of children. What children see, listen to, feel and experience shapes their future. Tribal children are brought up in the forest villages in the background of tribal rituals, ceremonies, and various activities of communities around them. But those of us who are brought up in an urban educated world have a perception, meaning and purpose of education and grooming. The process of education as a system varies from culture to culture and context (time and space). The government with good intention establishes schools and appoints teachers for teaching the tribal children. But the tribal children have their own cultural mindset, traditions and aspirations to meet their immediate need for livelihoods in their own natural environment. The children of the particular vulnerable tribal group (PVTGs) are deprived of many goods and services, which has resulted in their economic losses, pre-agricultural level of technology, and declining population with a low level of literacy in comparison to others. Their literacy level is far from reasonable than the non-tribal.

The tribal children wake up with cock's crow and join their parents in forests or farms or tending the livestock. The children pluck leaves, collect the non-timber forest products and help their families as well as communities in many activities for subsistence. Neither parents nor children consider school-going as a dignified act in their society. The tribal

children in the school do not feel comfortable with the non-tribals. Rather, the children enjoy working with their parents.

It requires competent educators who can help tribal children of different cultural backgrounds, languages, beliefs. Shaping their naturally acquired art of expressions, engaging with their aspirations and working with traditions in order to fulfill their requirements of subsistence is important. The teaching methods, curriculum and timings have to suit the crop calendars and seasonal variations of the tribal ecosystem and traditional practices of livelihoods.

