

# **Educational Choices and Conundrums of Bhutia Tribes:**

## **A Study**

An Abstract Submitted

To

**Sikkim University**



In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for the

**Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

By

**Kunzang Peden Bhutia**

Department of Education

School of Professional Studies

August, 2020

## **1.0 Introduction**

Education in modern society is largely based on the potentiality of an individual, both mental and social. It is regarded as an instrument of change and is really one of the major means available to a civilized society for improving lot of its member. The role of occupation has created sociological impact in the lives of an individual. Young people passing out from their schools are entering in the world of work, when they enter the new place of work they face various problems adjusting in their social life. Education in the widest sense is very important whether it be formal education or informal education. It helps in enhancing the quality of the life of an individual as well as community. Educational choices of the students are based on the choices they make at senior secondary school level. Choosing an educational course at senior secondary level (after class X) means choosing a path of life. The choice which the students make at this stage is directly related to the vocation which they tend to adopt after finishing the schools. Today, occupation has become very important for an individual. This helps in identifying their social status and personal interest; hence the youths have become very cautious in making the educational choices. It affects every aspects of human life like their life styles, friends, marriage, leisure-time activities and above all vocation they adopt. Senior Secondary education serves as a bridge between secondary and higher education. Here the student makes decision among various subjects he/she has to choose. Senior secondary level is also known as a crucial stage of an individual life. The students decide at this stage for their future prospects. The decision at this stage is very important as it helps the young people to prepare for the future. At this stage the students is in a place where they sees different roads in front of them which put them in dilemma. This is the stage where the students have to choose their academic plans and careers. Everyone make decision about their choices in every stage of life and it becomes very crucial decision for an individual to make choices regarding their education. Deciding on what to choose will always have consequences which lead to confusion. The result of the decision that has been chosen will sometimes hinder or help the individual in future. Choosing the right path is more important for the young learners. They have to take into account of so many

factors while choosing their education. There are so many factors which may influence their decision while choosing their education.

### **1.1 Need and Significance of the Study**

Sikkim is a state where various types of ethnic communities live together in harmony in spite of their different culture and traditions. The researcher conducted a study on one of this ethnic group i.e Bhutia Tribe of Sikkim. As the Bhutia tribe is also known as Lhopos or Lhorees (Gyamtsso, 2011) are evolving tribe of State Sikkim, and it becomes necessary to understand the educational choices and conundrums of young learners of Bhutia Tribe. The educational problems of the tribes are studied with regard to certain established theories but still there is a need to understand the complex educational processes of tribal society by developing a substantive theory from data that is collected in natural settings which calls for research. The present study is an attempt to explore the educational choices and conundrums of Bhutia tribe students. Educational choices and conundrums play an important role in shaping the career of students as well as it also helps the student to aspire in education field. A student entering the senior secondary school has to make very crucial decision of their life. The choice of stream and various courses in a stream makes a great deal of difference for the future of the students. Even within academic stream, the student has to decide whether he/she should opt for science stream or arts or commerce. The student choices at this stage are determined by many factors. Adolescent students are generally swayed by the environmental factors; society, family, friends and more. In this way they come across many confusion and problems regarding their choices. Further, the factors have to be identified accordingly and this is exactly that motivated the researcher to undertake the present research. It is necessary to collect sufficient statistical information regarding the spread of education among the tribal people. There should be special investigations also regarding important aspects of the spread of education amongst the tribal's and their effects. A continuous programme of research and evaluation has to be developed for this purpose. There is no study on educational choices and conundrums on Bhutia tribe, therefore the researcher has decided to explore and develop theory on educational choices and conundrums.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The present study attempted to study on Educational choices and Conundrums of Bhutia Tribes of Sikkim. The researcher conducted a grounded theory methodology where the researcher explored the factors affecting choices and developed a theory on educational choices and conundrums of Bhutia tribe students of Sikkim. Hence the problem is stated as “Educational Choices and Conundrums of Bhutia Tribes: A Study”.

## **1.3 Operational Definition of the terms Used**

**Educational Choices:** refers to the options, decisions, aspirations and preferences of Bhutia tribe students.

**Conundrums:** refers to the dilemmas, difficulties, complexities and problems while making educational choice by Bhutia tribe students.

**Bhutia Tribes:** refers to the lhopos Bhutia students studying in senior secondary school of Sikkim only.

## **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study will be as follows-

1. To study the development of education among Bhutia tribe of Sikkim since 1975.
2. To explore the educational choices and conundrums of Bhutia tribe students of Sikkim.
3. To explore the effect of gender, aspiration and socio economic status with educational choices and conundrums.
4. To explore the educational problems faced by Bhutia tribe students of Sikkim.

## **1.5 Research Questions**

1. How is the development of education among Bhutia tribe of Sikkim since 1975?
2. What are the educational choices and conundrums of Bhutia tribes of Sikkim?

3. How gender, socio economic status and aspiration affect the educational choices and conundrums?
4. How the Bhutia students view the educational problems?

## **1.6 Delimitation of the Study**

The Study is delimited to only areas having a concentration of Bhutia Tribe in all the four district of Sikkim i.e. Pelling from West Sikkim, Phodong from North Sikkim, VGCL Ravangla from South Sikkim, Sang Martam from East Sikkim. The study is delimited to the “Ihopo Bhutia” tribe students of senior secondary schools.

## **1.6 Methodology**

### **1.6.1 Research Design**

The research methodology is a systematic way to go to the bottom of research problem. During that problem solving process the researcher has to find an appropriate method and techniques for effective and successful research. The exploratory design has been adopted for the proposed study where the study is concerned with conducting a specific theory by adopting grounded theory. The research design is qualitative in nature.

### **1.6.2 Population and Sample**

- Population: The universe of the study was senior secondary Bhutias Students of Sikkim
- Sample: In order to assess the educational choices and conundrums of Bhutia Tribe students were the sample. 30 Bhutia students included students studying at 4 Senior Secondary School from all the four districts of Sikkim i.e. Sang Senior Secondary School, East Sikkim, Phodong Senior Secondary School, North Sikkim, Pelling Senior Secondary School, West Sikkim and VGCL Ravangla Senior Secondary School, South Sikkim. Further 10 key informants were also interviewed in order to validate the primary data and also to saturate that data these key informants were contacted and the data was collected from them.

- Sampling Technique: Theoretical Sampling is an important feature of Grounded theory. Theoretical Sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The sample was selected purposefully, and the respondents were chosen accordingly. Theoretical Sampling was used to flesh out the properties of a tentative category in Grounded Theory.

Theoretical Sampling procedure was adopted for collecting data from the respondents. The data should have theoretical sensitivity, i.e. ability to generate concept from the data and to relate models of theory in general and theory development in sociology in particular (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). To satisfy the objective of the study the samples were collected from 30 Bhutia Tribe students studying in Senior Secondary Schools of Sikkim for interview. The data collection and constant comparison continued till fresh data or new respondents no longer produce new insights i.e. theoretical saturation. Respondents who were willing to participate in the research according to that the saturation level were 10 key informants. Keeping in mind the absence of new insights the researcher interviewed to next 10 key informants.

### **1.6.3 Tools used**

Interview guide includes the questions about the respondents' educational choices, the factors involve in choosing their education, their problems and conundrums while making their educational choices and their perception about their educational choices and conundrums. So for the present study unstructured interview schedule was used for the in depth study and data collection.

In- depth interviews with the Senior Secondary students of Bhutia Tribe were done individually. And also key informant interview were adopted for collecting primary data. Additionally, the study used educational aspiration scale among purposively selected sample. The secondary data collected were from different journal (national and international), articles, books, annual report, websites etc.

In- depth Interviews: An interview is a directed conversation with the respondents. It is a crucial element of a qualitative research. An interview is an oral- verbal stimulus in terms of oral –verbal response method of data collection process. In qualitative research, an in–depth interview is frequently the main source of information which will explore the phenomenon in detail. It is an inquiry which offers a flexible approach. Exploration of facts or experience is being put forward in in-depth interviews. The in-depth nature of method elicits each respondent' interpretation of his/her experience (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). As a tool of inquiry, broad open ended, non-judgmental questions are framed. The tools are open ended, directed and unrestricted, the in-depth interview of qualitative research fits grounded theory method. In order to correct tendencies to follow preconceived notions about the study setting, this helps the learning to start from the outset of research. Therefore the combination of flexibility and control inherent in-depth interview techniques fit grounded theory strategies for increasing analytic results.

### **1.7 Data Analysis**

The textual analysis has been conducted to explain the perspectives of the students with regard to their educational choices and conundrums. The researcher interviewed and collected information from the Bhutia people who were the first to join various professions. The information of the development of Bhutia people since 1975 was also presented in this chapter. The first part explained the profile of the participants including gender, annual income and educational aspiration of the respondents. This part is followed by the second part which explains the process of choices of the respondents in deciding the educational choices and conundrums. In the third part, educational choices and conundrums as per educational aspiration, gender and socio-economic status of the participants were discussed. The constant comparative method was used by the researcher to develop concepts from the data by coding and analysing at the same time. Line by line transcription and coding was done by a researcher. After coding the categories and themes evolved were classified into patterns which further helped in generation of a theory on educational choices and conundrums of Bhutia tribe students of Sikkim

### *Generating Theory on educational choices*

Thus it is clear and proposed a theory that the educational choices of Bhutia students are generally influenced by parents and teachers and media. It is interesting to find that these students are at adolescent stage but the peers and their life style and the issues in society has made lesser impact while making educational choices. The study establishes that Bhutia senior secondary school students are not yet fully matured and independent in taking decisions regarding their educational choices, whereas their educational choices are influenced by teachers in school, family and the members of the family and also the media is increasingly making impact in making decisions and choosing courses related to their educational choices.

### *Level of aspiration among Bhutia tribe students*

The study found that Bhutia students were generally shy and not forthrightly frank and open, so it was assumed that their aspiration may be moderate or low. Most of the Bhutia student's participants in the study were from rural background, so it was assumed that they may not be much aware of education choices and option available for them. However the study found that the 21 Bhutia tribe senior secondary school students were assured about their educational choices. They were determined to reach their dream as they made certain choices in education. They also expressed that the hard work they are doing is to reach their goal. It was clear that majority was from rural background and few of them had financial problem at home however, the participants were confirmed and optimistic about their educational choices. The study established the theory that socio-economic status and unavailability of information about the educational choices affects the aspiration of students.

### *Generating Theory on Conundrums*

The study establishes the theory that lack of information regarding the subject's choices that has been a major source of conundrums among Bhutia senior secondary school students. Conflict with parental choice hasn't caused much dilemma. The study also highlights that students are given less information regarding the choices of subjects and the future prospects which has been the root of conundrum. The students at this stage are



young and yet to be fully matured, they need to be provided with complete information which certainly helps them in making appropriate decisions regarding their educational choices.

*Generating theory on effect of gender, aspiration and socio-economic status on educational choices and conundrums*

The study explored that gender, aspiration and socio-economic status effect educational choices and conundrums.

*Aspiration is a deciding factor in educational choice*

In the present study the aspiration of students was tested and labelled as high, moderate and low aspiration. Further the information of students on educational choices as per the aspiration was collected and analysed. The study found that three female Bhutia students with high aspiration showed interest and leaning towards higher education. Despite of some family's financial problem, the female students are tenacious and determined about pursuing higher studies. The high aspiring students showed confidence and determination in pursuing higher education regarding their educational choice. Three male students with high aspiration were clear about their choice. They were focused and highly interested in their choice. This indicated that who have had high aspiration had well defined academic goals. This indicated that the Bhutia students having high aspiration were more inclined towards higher education. In contrast students from low financial condition showed no interest to study further. This indicated that the Bhutia student having low aspiration towards showed low inclination towards higher education. Thus the study submit a theory that aspiration is the pivot in making decisions in education regarding the choices.

*Socio-economic status effect the educational choices*

The study assumed that socio economic status does not affect the educational choices of Bhutia students. The study analysed the information of Bhutia students from different socio-economic status to see if this affects the educational choices. The study explored that the educational aspiration and educational choices of the participants belonging to

upper middle class match and they were clear and determined about their choice. They had confidence and economic support of the family to aspire high and make choice to study further. Therefore, the study generates a theory that socio economic status affect the educational choices of Bhutia senior secondary school students.

#### *Generating theory on problems faced by Bhutia Students*

The study explored that there are various factors which caused problem among Bhutia senior school students. These factors were validated with the data from key informants. Further these factors were classified into two main categories based on the locus of the problem- problem due to self and problem due to family and school. The study found that the main problems were within self of the students. The problems faced due to students themselves were that they did not know their own language and they were not able to speak their own language. Language gives the identity and also a sense of togetherness in the group. These students who do not understand their own language certainly were having identity problem. Language not only expresses identity but also constructs the identity. So these Bhutia students find difficulty to identify with the group when their native language was spoken. Beside which another problem was that students themselves lack engagement with studies due to lack of attention and interest in themselves. It showed that studies were not able to grab attention of these students. So they were not intrigued and fascinated by higher studies. The study explored that low socio-economic status of the family has stood as the problem for the Bhutia students. Due to low economic status, the students themselves were involved in household activities. Further the study found that due to unavailability of adequate information regarding educational choices in schools, the Bhutia senior secondary school students faced confusion and uncertainty. They could not make appropriate and relevant choices for their education. Thus the study put forward the theory that locus of problems among Bhutia senior secondary school students are located both external and internal. The internal locus of problem is weak identity and lack of interest in studies. The external locus of the problem is family with financial problems and unsupportive parents and another external locus is schools with limited counseling on educational choices.

## **1.8 Implications of the Study**

The researched study may have impact on the following agencies or individuals which may bring positive change and betterment in education of Bhutia tribes. The implications of the study are identified for the a) Policy makers, b) Teachers, c) Parents, d) Community, e) Students

### **1.8.1 Policy makers**

The findings of the study will provide detailed information for education policy makers about educational choices and conundrums of Bhutia tribe students of Sikkim. It was observed that conundrums faced by the Bhutia students were school syllabus was insufficient and the students were unable to choose the subjects according to their interest. The inadequate subject available in the schools becomes insufficient for the student which makes them compromise their interest or the field of study Therefore, education policy makers of the state should emphasized on the introduction educational choices according to the interest of the students. It was also observed that problem like low financial status of the parents was found to deter the aspiration of the students for going for higher education. The parents and students are still unaware about the government's financial aid in the form of scholarships and grants which are being provided to those under- privileged tribal students. Unaware regarding the scholarships and the lack of knowledge of their own rights, grant in aids and scholarships were found during the study. Hence the study may apprise the policy makers that there is a need to spread necessary information regarding the stipends and scholarships to rural schools, so that the students having financial condition will get full benefit in availing the stipends and scholarships.

### **1.8.2 Teachers**

Teachers are considered as crucial factor in shaping the education of an individual. The study apprises teachers that they need to be well equipped with the information that motivates interest in students. Education is an important avenue for upgrading the economic and social status of a society. Proper guidance and counseling should be

imparted to the Bhutia students regarding the choices available for them. The present study will help teachers to understand the choices, interest and problems of the students with regard to their education. It was observed in the present study that, one major factor for all conundrums were lack of information among students regarding choices of subjects. The finding of the study provides the teacher to solve the conundrums of the students. The study will help the teachers to provide comprehensive information regarding choices of subjects.

### **1.8.3 Parents**

Parents are one of the main influencer to the students. The study reports that they should be aware of their children's interest and accordingly they have to help their child in choosing the education on their own interest. It was observed from the study that Bhutia parents from low economic background were not aware about the studies of their children. Hence the findings of the study will help the Bhutia parents to understand about their role and guide their children to take a right step.

### **1.8.4 Community**

Education is an important avenue for upgrading the economic and social status of tribal society. It was observed from the study that identity of Bhutia students is important and community was found as an important factor in helping the child in making their educational choices. It was observed from the study that a conundrum like lack of affinity with the mother tongue has caused confusion. Therefore the study will help the community to encourage people in the family to communicate Bhutia language so that their children also learn. Language is the part of our identity. There is a need for proper guidance, positive reinforcement among Bhutia students for future studies. The study will further help the community to motivate the students by acknowledging them and awarding or supporting for them in their education.

### **1.8.5 Students**

The findings of the present study will be helpful for the Bhutia students to be aware of their own abilities and also understand their interest regarding their educational choice. The study will further help the Bhutia students to be aware and determined regarding their capabilities. The study also informs them to take interest in studies, to work hard and have ambitions. They should also be clear of their choices, and work in a consistent and focused manner to reach their dream. The study also briefs that family, teachers, and parents plays an important role in their education.

### **1.9 Recommendations of the Study**

The recommendation of the study is basically for the development of Bhutia tribe students. It is a humble effort of the researcher to bring forward the recommendations for the development of students belonging to Bhutia tribe. The recommendations are made keeping in mind the objectives of the study. In order to make it specific, the recommendations are made hierarchically for each level or individual

#### **1.9.1 Policy makers**

As the world is changing so fast and even the minds of the students are changing. Today's generation students are much more interested in creative interventions. The study recommends that introduction of educational choices should be adopted according to the interest of the students. All the policy makers who are concerned with tribal education could come up with new and creative subjects so that many of tribal students may get employed. The policy makers in government should advocate inclusive growth and other tribal students by financially supporting these students coming from economically weaker families. The curriculum in school subjects should include information on history, tribal culture and traditions. They will get an opportunity to learn tribal folksongs, languages and folk tales. Special provisions which are provided by the government should be equally distributed among all the tribal groups. When introducing or planning policies for the welfare of the tribal students, the involvement of tribes are felt to be important. Their cultural and traditional lifestyle has to be studied before

government brings radical changes in their lives. Representation of tribal students in higher education is very low; to counter this problem there must be some career counselling programmes at secondary level along with providing scholarship for pursuing higher education (Daripa, 2017). The study also recommended that vocational training centres should be operated in schools or in tribal areas in order to develop skill of tribal students. It is further recommended that appointment of tribal teachers should be encouraged so that the tribal students may feel familiar and comfortable to learn. The government should document the achievements of tribal people and their achievement story maybe inspiration to many young people in the society.

### **1.9.2 Teachers**

It is strongly recommended that teacher should be given counseling regarding the choices, needs and interest of the tribal students. Proper training should be arranged for the teachers to understand the tribal student's capabilities. Teachers' should conduct remedial classes in which proper counseling regarding the need and interest as well as the options available for the future studies should be given to the students. It is also recommended that the teachers should make the classroom environment vibrant so that the students learn inclusively with all other students. The teachers should also ensure that teaching method and elaboration with examples should match with need and interest of the students.

### **1.9.3 Parents**

Parents play an important role in guiding and helping their children in making educational choice. It is recommended that the parents should be aware about the studies of their children. In a studies conducted by Akula, 2013; Savatkar, 2014 & Ganguly, 2016, they identified the reasons behind low achievement of the students are because of unaware parents about the education of the child as well as engagement of the tribal students in agricultural work and household responsibilities. It is recommended that the tribal parents should guide and encourage their children to aspire in education. They should also be aware of their children's capabilities. Continuous guidance and open

communication between parents and children will also help children to express their interest. They should also be an example to their children.

#### **1.9.4 Community**

It is recommended that, community should be aware of policies for tribal people, achievement of tribal people and problems faced by tribal students. They should organize awareness programme among tribal people on education, health, and the rights of the tribal people. The students should be acknowledged by awarding or supporting which will encourage them to study further. If students are given recognition at home, society and school then these students will get motivation in studies and life as well to yearn to do better. Also, the junior students will learn from them and will try to follow their steps in a hope to receive recognition and acknowledgement. So, the study recommended that community should play the role of positive reinforcement for the students. Guidance and Counselling programmes can also be organized from time to time to encourage the students to pursue education by the community members. The study recommend that coaching facilities should also be given to the Bhutia tribal students during the school vacation as that will encourage the students and keep them informed. The community should develop strategy to disseminate information on choices of subjects and education. They should use technology and media to spread awareness on education amongst the tribal people.

#### **1.9.5 Students**

It is recommended that the students should understand about their educational choices and also should be aware about the available options. It is also strongly recommended that the Bhutia students should be aware about their languages and learn it, as it is the crucial factor of identity. They should be aware of their choices. And the Bhutia students should engage themselves in activities and courses related to their interest and capabilities. They should participate in sharing information regarding educational choices. They should be diligent, they should dream and aspire to reach high in life. They should also be creative in thoughts and action and develop various skills so that

they can get employment as well as be an entrepreneur in various fields. They should always have regards for our culture and traditions as they move forward in this modernized world.

### **1.10 Suggestions for Further Research**

The study suggested for further research as follows:

1. Educational choices and conundrums of the students of all the communities of Sikkim.
2. Educational Choices and conundrums of the Bhutia students studying in college level.
3. Study on impact of technology on educational choices and conundrums of Bhutia students.
4. A comprehensive study of the role parents in the educational choice of the students of Sikkim.
5. A longitudinal study of change in educational choices over stages of education from primary to college education.
6. A study on socio-psychological determinants of educational choices of students of Sikkim.