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**HONOURING THE SILENT VOICES OF PRE-SERVICE WARLI TEACHERS IN  
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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**Abstract**

*This paper describes the first in the sequence of 3 phase research project based on the Development and evaluation of an ongoing “Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Teacher Education(C R E C T E) program for pre-service Warli teachers in India. It portrays the silent voices of the pre-service Warli Early Childhood Educators in a context in which their cultural landscape, issues of identity, pragmatics of employment, family and community and a bureaucratic mechanism intersect to create educational scenarios that are multi-faceted in their complexity. This landscape of professional pathways of pre-service Warli teachers offer data for teacher educators and policy-makers to consider in the drive to 'close the gap' in the early childhood educational opportunity among Warli community.*

**Introduction**

This study is a part of a project on the development and evaluation of a pre-service teacher education program for culturally responsive early childhood education for the Warli children. This project is funded by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

➤ **Contextualizing the Cultural Landscape**

Warli is the name of a tribe, which resides in Thane district of Maharashtra, India on the northern outskirts of Mumbai and extends up to the Gujarat border. They are spread out in the villages named Dahanu, Talasari, Mokhada, Vada, Palghara and several other parts of the district as well. The origin of the warlis is not clearly known. It is generally believed that the Warlis once inhabited the region near Dharampur, Megasthenes describes this region as the Varalata which means a piece of land, and thus, perhaps, the Warlis acquired the name that they are known by today (Sanskriti Kosa, 19, 608 cited in Dandekar.).

The warlis were originally hunters but today they are farmers and work according to the monsoon cycle. The Warli speak their own Indo-Aryan dialect, which is mixture of Khandeshi Bhili, Gujarati and Marathi. They also speak Marathi and Gujarati and use them for written communication. These two languages are also the medium of instruction in the areas which the community is residing.

Nature is considered as mother by the Warlis. It is central to all their customs and traditions. The midwife gives a newborn male an axe and a female a sickle - The two tools necessary to access the bounties of nature. She tells the child not to fear the tiger or the bear or any wild animal; and not to flee from the 'forces of nature'. He should live in harmony with nature. Their folk paintings are also influenced by the seasonal cycle as their life around the nature. To understand and enjoy the paintings of Warlis, one should know their religion, their rituals and see life from their perspective. As the life of Warlis link closely with nature, they worship the nature in different forms – Sun and moon, God of thunder, lightning, wind, rain, and several others. Gods are worshiped according to the seasons.

Demographically, while only 7% of India's population remains indigenous, 65% of Dahanu's 300,000 inhabitants consist of the native Warli people. The Warlis in Dahanu own 45,000 acres of land (18% of the total acreage). The Warlis remain quite unassimilated from the rest of the India; they maintain their own dress style, customs, religion, and ceremonies. (Taneja and Anisha, 2010) The Warlis have gained recognition only recently. Today this community is

known for their folk paintings all over the world. Their rich cultural heritage has to be preserved and transmitted to the coming generations.

Like any tribal community Warli community is also facing many attacks on their indigenous cultural heritage due to unplanned process of modernization, encroachment on their lands and their exploitation by insensitive social categories. This has brought their cultural identity at stake. It is equally encouraging to see that several non government and non profit organizations have come forward to give a helping hand to the Warli community for protection of their rights and rich cultural heritage. One of these organizations is “Girivanvasi Educational Trust” (GVET) which is a part of Somaiya Trust and known for its great contribution to the field of integrated development of tribal communities in India. This trust has started several projects at Nareshwadi. Nareshwadi Learning Centre (NLC) is comprised of the Leelaben Kotak Primary School, the K. J. Somaiya High School, a Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Centre and student residences.

One of its unique contributions is launching of a pre-service teacher education programme for culturally responsive early childhood education for Warli children. This programme is innovative in many ways. The aim of this ongoing project is to collaboratively develop and implement culturally responsive early childhood education teacher preparation curriculum in association with local indigenous school teachers and teacher educators working in Mumbai. The project includes the development of place based and culturally relevant teacher education curriculum that presents regionally appropriate data regarding culturally responsive early childhood education.

Culturally Responsive Teaching refers to the teaching that connects students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to academic knowledge and intellectual tools in ways that legitimize what students already know. By embracing the socio cultural realities and histories of students through what is taught and how, culturally responsive teachers negotiate classrooms cultures with their students that reflect the communities where students develop and grow. (Professor Geneva Gay, 2000). This requires that teachers transcend their own cultural biases and preferences to establish and develop patterns for learning and communicating that engage and

sustain student participation and achievement.

The achievement gap in the students often separates groups of students by drawing differences between indigenous and non indigenous, middle class and poor students. There are many harmful effects of looking at performance in terms of gaps, particularly because the gaps that are noticed privilege some kinds of knowledge over others. While the path to future education is based on banking particular kinds of knowledge and using it to demonstrate competence, we cannot forget that practical and indigenous ways of knowing offer great insight and have social significance. Culturally responsive teaching helps to bridge different ways of knowing and engages students from non-dominant cultures in demonstrating their proficiencies in language usage, grammar, mathematical knowledge and other tools they use to navigate their everyday lives. (EB Kozleski, 2001).

Culturally responsive teaching helps the teachers to create these bridges and in doing so, offers the possibility for transformational knowledge that leads to socially responsible action on the part of teachers and students.

## **Rationale**

### ➤ **Need for Indigenous Perspective in Early Childhood Education**

Too often, indigenous perspectives are left out of school curricula. Within the context of early childhood education, utilizing place-based strategies and focusing on local data about early childhood care and educational practices necessitate the inclusion of all stakeholders including Tribal communities. This is particularly important in the Dahanu area, where Warli community resides prominently. After the National Policy on Education in 1986 the Government of India officially started promoting and supporting the early childhood education programmes in the country. As a result many early childhood care and education centres, Kindergarten classes and community schools (Anganwadis and Balwadis) were opened in urban as well as in the rural areas. But Dahanu area where there are innumerable small Padas (hamlets- group of 30/35 houses) remained deprived from proper early childhood care and education facilities.

Lack of early childhood care and education programmes, lack of parental awareness about the need for the same, culturally closeness of the Warless, medium of local instruction being Marathi which is the state language of Maharashtra, the Warli children were not prepared

for school education. The situation used to be worse when the Warli children had to attend the elementary schools in Marathi language and adjust with non tribal culture. This very often led to the development of inferiority complex among the Warli children.

Instead of feeling proud of their heritage they felt ashamed of certain customs and traditions when they started interacting with other non tribal children (for example consumption of alcohol by the men as well as women during festivals and even otherwise, which is not accepted in non indigenous population). As a result the Warli children are often found to be very quiet and non participants in the schools.

Hence there is a need for appropriate culturally responsive early childhood care and education facilities in the Dahanu vicinity which would prepare the Warli children for the school education.

➤ **Need for the indigenous approach to teacher preparation**

Given that the Teacher Education programmes in India, are being conducted solely in the context of general system of education and offered by the government and Private teacher education institutions recognized by The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), perhaps it is time for us to rethink the ways that the indigenous teachers are prepared. If we are serious about preserving the cultural identity of the indigenous people, then we need to recognize the important role that teachers can play in the preservation of their indigenous cultural heritage

This is more prominently needed at the early childhood care and education level as this stage if properly taken care off will serve a strong bridge between the uni-cultural and uni-lingual life of the indigenous pre-school age children to their life at elementary education level where they have to adjust to the uniform system of education. With slow educational progress and high illiteracy rate among Warli community not many teachers belonging to this community are available in the local schools. Majority of the teachers are from non indigenous background.

Neither during pre-service nor during their in-service teacher education programmes the teachers are oriented to the socio-cultural dimensions of the Warli community. This creates a wide gap between the Warli children and their non indigenous peers and teachers. All these leads to the low scholastic performance of the Warli children in all local and state level examinations.

The regular teachers who have been trained to teach general academics based on national curriculum to indigenous students including Warlis, without first becoming proficient in the pedagogy of their indigenous language, culture, and history and who have not been trained to integrate their indigenous way of life into classroom activities only perpetuate education problems of indigenous students - the achievement gap and the low level of academic scores of students.

Training Indigenous teachers in exclusively general academics is likely to miss an important part of the education of Indigenous teachers. It also teaches them implicitly if not explicitly, that indigenous ways are unimportant and that such aspects don't matter. This has the further undesirable consequence that teachers are not professionally prepared to help students learn, value, and come to understand their Indigenous identity. Thus teachers are not equipped to help students explore the role that Indigenous communities can play in present global scenario; they are unable to teach important Indigenous values such as communalism and reciprocity, respect for nature. This is not to argue that learning general academics is unimportant, but that these goals must be embedded in and responsive to the goals of the Indigenous community.

It is dangerous to seek the solution to the problem of the academic under-achievement (of culturally and linguistically diverse students) constructed in primarily methodological and mechanistic terms alone dislocated from the socio-cultural realities that shape it.

It is equally undesirable to find the solutions to problems drawn from outside rather than inside, from the general system rather than from practices that embody Indigenous ways of knowing.

The researchers feel that renewal of the teacher education programmes is a matter of community involvement. Teacher Education that is firmly rooted in the cultures of indigenous community is the need of the hour. The main purpose of education in the indigenous localities is the survival, transformation and sustainability of the indigenous peoples and societies. Teachers must recognize the importance of using learning outcomes firmly rooted in cultural identity and local knowledge.

In short, our indigenous approach to teacher preparation should continued to replicate methods and systems of teacher education designed more for the residents of indigenous localities like Dahanu. Indigenous students have started going away from their traditional oral knowledge about many things( like how to read the stars that their ancestors once used to guess the seasons, how to fish or hunt the Indigenous way, weave mats and baskets, build up mud houses , or identify the correct leaves for making Indigenous medicines). Sadly, many Indigenous students are ignorant of many of the important practices and values of their culture.

Traditional Warli community ways of teaching and learning are integrated within family and community life. Youngsters learn through listening to the words from the mouths of their elders—observing, imitating, and engaging actively in day to day activities. Through active engagement, they learn and internalize. A child having firm cultural connectivity has a good self-concept and the confidence needed to perform well in school and in life, no matter where he or she goes. This is the desired learning outcome of education.

The focus on creating ownership and making education an integral part of families and communities cannot be ignored in Warli communities. That ownership actually should start with schools and teachers building on the knowledge learners bring from home, honoring the language they bring to the school, and connecting learning to contexts familiar to them.

Across the Dahanu region, schools are experiencing high student absenteeism and high dropout rates. Students seem to be disconnected from the schooling process. The value of relationship with nature, which has such an important place in the livelihood of Warli people, is ignored in school.

Perhaps our system of education today has failed to produce the Indigenous students that the community so desperately needs —those who can face the challenges of the twenty-first century. The education system has essentially alienated Indigenous people from their indigenous ways—the values, language, culture, and sense of Indigenous identity—by excluding indigenous knowledge from the curriculum and from the preparation of Indigenous teachers. For this reason, the researchers believe that, it is important to restore a more indigenous approach to the

preparation of teachers - one that builds on Indigenous values, language, and perceptions of the world in their relation to general academics.

### ➤ **Portraying the Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Teacher Education(C R E C T E) Programme**

As mentioned earlier the C R E C T E programme is funded by CIDA. The GVET in partnership with K.J.Somaiya College of Education(Mumbai) and Leelaben Kotak Primary School, K.J. Somaiya High school(Nareshwadi) have Collaboratively designed and started delivering a yearlong C R E C T E programme for the Warli pre-service teachers. Keeping in view high turnover of non indigenous teachers every year and non availability of new teachers it was decided to enroll the local Warli candidates in the programmes. The organizers also thought that this would help in building a more sustainable staff and increase the number of indigenous teachers from within.

The 2 teacher educators of K.J. Somaiya college of Education ( who are the authors of the paper) conceptualized a “ Work Integrated Teacher Education Model” in which two indigenous and two non indigenous school teachers from Nareshwadi learning centre are oriented to be the facilitators and the mentors of the pre-service teachers. Along with the theoretical inputs from the mentors, the pre-service teachers are assisting the early childhood educators in their day to day work. The pedagogical component is integrated with the practical work that the pre-service teachers are performing every day in the actual Early Childhood Education(ECE) centres like planning daily sessions, individual educational plans( IEPs ) of the children and overall classroom management . The learning tasks and assessment items are planned to complement and enrich their practice in the local environment, and to position them from being seen as teacher assistants to actual teachers.

### **The main features of this programme are as follows:**

- Selection of Indigenous Warli students as the trainees,
- Involvement of Warli teachers as cooperating teachers,

- Focus on the 'bicultural and bilingual development' of the Warli children through culturally responsive instructional processes,
- Interweaving local indigenous resources , oral literature, folk art in to the instructional processes during transition from uni-cultural and uni- lingual dimensions of Warli life to bicultural and bilingual ECE ,
- focus on creating conditions in classrooms and schools that integrate pre-service teachers' needs and culture and a critical pedagogy, having the pre-service teachers raise questions about their own immediate conditions and those of the Warli community and identify ways to transform these conditions."

The teacher educators were in touch with the mentors through out the programme and were giving consultation time to time but they could not interact with the pre-service teachers regularly. This had to be accepted because both the teacher educators are full time employees in the college of education. Besides due to the lack of technical facilities they even could not provide any online support to the pre-service teachers or observe their progress during their work integrated C R E C T E programme.

To compensate this , the teacher educators have organized a fortnight long intensive contact programme which provided the pre-service teachers with theoretical and practical exposure in Mumbai including internship in ECE centers in Mumbai, visits to ECE centres that are following innovative practices. The teacher educators used mainly role plays and simulation sessions for providing the theoretical inputs. These techniques helped the teacher educators and mentors in building the bridge between them and the trainees. They also helped to link the theory with the life realities of the trainees.

At present the participants have completed the first semester of the ECE programme. The fortnight long contact programme gave an enriching experience to the pre-service teachers. It was a learning experience for teacher educators as well. It provided them with an insight into the feelings of the pre-service Warli teachers about C R E C T E programme. The present paper is the first in the sequence of the three phase research project which will investigate how the ECE program is operating in Warli community using data from the Warli local context .The second and third phases of the project report will deal with impact of work integrated C R E C T

E on pre-service teachers' self efficacy beliefs about implementing culturally responsive ECE and project evaluation respectively.

### **Research Questions**

The purposes of this part of the study were limited to

a) Examining the pre-service Warli teachers' perceptions about need for the culturally responsive E C E programme.

b) Examining the foreseen challenges by the pre-service teachers in promoting culturally responsive ECE programme for Warli children; their expectations in terms of the kind of support they anticipate receiving from different stake holders during their induction into teaching profession.

Hence underpinning our research were four key question:

1. What according to the pre-service Warli teachers is the need for culturally responsive ECE programme for enhancing the early childhood development of the Warli children?
2. What are the feelings of pre-service Warli teachers towards infusion of cultural responsiveness in ECE programme for promoting Warli culture ?
3. What challenges do the pre-service Warli teachers foresee in practicing culturally responsive ECE programme after they complete the training?
4. What kind of support do the pre- service Warli teachers expect from the community?

### **Method**

In this part of the research, the researchers were particularly interested in listening to the voices of nine Pre-service Warli Teacher enrolled in C R E C T E programmes. Equally important was also ensuring that Pre-service Warli teachers see their cultural aspects embedded and respected in the ECE programme and in the research study.

The group of nine participants consisted of five females and four mails. 6 of them had completed schooling for 10 years while three had passed 12th (higher secondary level of

education). All the participants are residing in Dahanu area and six of them had got their education through residential schools. Their age ranged from 16 to 21 years. All of them belonged to lower economic strata and mainly got enrolled in to ECE course for future job prospects. They knew that with the certificate obtained after this course they would be eligible to work as a teacher in a early childhood education centre or they can open their own ECE centre in their vicinity.

Although the small number participants are the limitation of this study, they did offer a diversity of experiences based in terms of identity, sex, and initial educational level.

Keeping in view that the particular circumstances facing the Pre-service Warli teachers could not be investigated meaningfully through mere surveys or interviews, the researchers brought together nine participants for a formal group field interview in the form of a three-sessions Wildfire Gathering at the K.J. Somaiya college of Education . Wildfire Research Method (WRM, Hodson, 2004) is designed to complement traditional and cultural beliefs, as well as indigenous methodologies and knowledge paradigms (Battiste, 2002) by engaging participants and researchers in authentic conversations in an environment that is respectful of indigenous languages and cultures. One non Warli but the resident of Dahanu area and closely familiar with Warli culture facilitators led the session, while two Warli mentors played an important role in fostering a communal environment in which participants could speak comfortably and safely of their cultural and professional identities, experiences and contexts.

The facilitators sensitive to Indigenous knowledge, used a range of general questions related to participants' experiences—for example, experiences that led them to become teachers, teacher education experiences, support they receive as trainees from the mentors , concerns as future indigenous teachers—to guide discussion. They also played a crucial role, modeling interconnectedness, respect, and the wisdom of the Indigenous intellectual tradition. Cajete (2008) rightly observed,” that Indigenous educational research is best performed when an Indigenous view and purpose are represented in the conceptualization, development, and implementation of research.

In the Wildfire Gathering, the participants spoke freely from their experiences as indigenous students. In coding and analyzing transcripts from the sessions, the researchers were attentive to indigenous Warli worldviews found in collectivity and connection. The researchers worked with two Warli facilitators from Nareshwadi.

They assisted in collecting the data. The researchers with the help of the Warli facilitators coded and analyzed transcripts. In the process, the facilitators offered culturally-sensitive understandings of the text that otherwise would have remained inaccessible for the researchers. In analyzing the data, the researchers borrowed tenets of grounded theory to develop categories of information, build a story that connects the categories, and develop a set of findings (Creswell, 1998). The researchers identified emerging patterns in the data while considering individual responses. Codes, categories, individual stories, and the indigenous context were juxtaposed and discussed in order to identify key themes. In presenting evidence, the researchers sought to maintain the distinctive voices of the participants while modifying details that might reveal their identities. The researchers involved the Warli facilitators in interpreting statements in the Warli context for making conclusions. When ever possible, they will also be included in the dissemination of findings at various academic gatherings.

### **Participants' Voices**

In this section, the researchers examine four significant themes that emerged from these discussions:

- (1) Concerns about culturally responsive ECE programme for the Warli children;
- (2) Excitement about infusing Warli culture in ECE programme;
- (3) Foreseen challenges in providing culturally responsive ECE to the Warli children;and
- (4) Expectations about community support for promoting culturally responsive ECE for the Warli children

### Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Education

The participants seen to be concerned about the provision of culturally responsive early childhood education for the Warli children. All the participants expressed the need for ECE for these children. **Participant 1** said "Our children have nobody to look after when both their parents go to work in the farm. The children just play in the dust or go to the forest which is not safe. **Participant 2** said "The illiterate parents do not know how to look after kids and teach the basic hygiene to the kids. If they go ECE centres at least they will learn something worthwhile. The remaining participants too agreed with these reasons for providing ECE for the warli children. But all the participants expressed their worry about non availability of ECE centres in the close vicinity of the children. Whatever Anganwadis( ECE centres opened by the government for the integrated development of all the pre-school children) are there, are not easy to be reached due to distance. Besides these centres use Marathi (state language of Maharashtra) and cater to all the categories of the children. The Warli children find themselves alienated

In these Anganwadis because they hardly understand what the teachers speak. The teachers too cannot communicate with these children unless any local Warli assistant is available. The songs, stories, play activities organized in the ECE centres remain largely inaccessible for them. The parents to find difficult to communicate to the teachers. The non Warli teachers often have a very poor opinion about the level of understanding among the children and the parents. They very often comment about the shabbiness of the Warli child, his unhygienic condition, lack of "so called cultured "behavior among the children and the parents, prevalent alcoholism among the Warli community , financial incapability of parents to provide the necessary school related resources to the children. All these emotionally drag away the Warli children from Anganwadis. The participants shared some of their childhood experiences of insult and discouragement which according to them are not rare even today.

**Participant: 4** said" Our children do not have proper clothes like other children to attend the Anganwadi. They can not bring handkerchief and stuff like that. The mothers do not have sometimes decent clothes to take the child to the Anganwadis. When the teachers comment about lack of hygiene or dirty cloths our parents just look down".

**Participant 7, 8 and 9 said**” The Warli children can not name the fruits , flowers, vegetables etc in Marathi though they know them in Warli language, and the teachers feel the child knows nothing.

**Participant 3 said**” Our children are happy to see the real birds, animals and play with them rather than seeing them in the picture. Our kids do sing, but our songs, they do dance , but our dance , they do paint, but the way we paint and they do know all the fruits, flowers and stuff like this , but which grows in our court yard and not that comes from the city market.”

**Participant 2 said:** Our children miss the way we celebrate our festivals with fervor, the way we dance and play the drums. Why all this is not done in the Anganwadis?”

**Participant 1 said** “I really feel that the ECE teachers should know how we live, what we eat, how we celebrate the festivals and they should also know at least few words of our language. Participant 2 added that the teachers should prepare parallel charts of alphabets and associated pictures in Warli language.

In Anganwadis at least the Warli assistants should be appointed so that both students and teachers would be benefited. Participant 9 said” The environment in Anganwadi should be like that of at our homes. The food given should be like the one we eat, the walls should be painted with the pictures like we paint at home and children should be made to play in the court yards and not in the rooms. They should be shown the real birds, made to collect fruits and flowers in the jungles and not to show them in the pictures.

All the participants felt that schools indirectly promote biases in instructional practices that have been detrimental to the achievement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They felt that teachers need to take initiative so that the school accepts the Warli children as they are. The teachers do not realize that by continuing a traditional "conform-or-fail" approach to instruction, they indirectly perpetuate a mono cultural institutional environment.

- **Infusing Culturally Responsiveness in the Early Childhood Educational Practices**

The participants seemed to be very excited and determined about making efforts to infuse the features of culturally responsive teaching in their current teaching practice and during the time of induction. They looked very enthusiastic in suggesting various ideas for infusing Warli cultural aspects in their day to day practices.

Among them were the following:

- preparing charts of Marathi alphabets with Warli words for objects,
- collections of Warli folk songs and stories,
- translating some of the Warli nursery rhymes in Marathi and vice versa,
- celebrating indigenous and non indigenous festival with equal fervor and joy,
- involving parents in all kind of celebrations,
- Initiating parental awareness programme for both Warli and non Warli population for getting their consent for bringing the elements of biculturalism and bilingualism in day to day instructional practices.

The participants not only suggested the ways of infusing the elements of biculturalism and bilingualism in their teaching but each one of them actually started composing songs spontaneously, drawing painting and even showing dance. These participants did not have thorough knowledge about the concept of “culturally responsive teaching” in their theoretical inputs but they did show the understanding about infusing the elements of Warli and regional culture in their day to day teaching.

They demonstrated deep commitment to sustaining Warli culture and encouraging culturally-appropriate learning for their Warli students. Participants were highly sensitive to the importance of developing self-esteem among the Warli children so that Warli students are more likely to succeed in school.

**Participant 2** said” Once we will start making use of Warli language, songs, stories etc at the initial stage and slowly help the kids to acquire the knowledge, then just see how they

would be at par with other children”. **Participant 6** said” If we will bring the Warli culture in the classroom, I can imagine the happy faces of our kids. **Participant 7** said “ Someone has to show the world that our kids can do everything and we will help them to do it. Participant 8 said” Our kids should be able to come to school with pride and respect and not with the feeling of impheority and I will develop this feeling in them.”

**Participant 4** added “ Our culture is rich and our children should feel proud about it and I will make them feel so .”Participant 9 said “I am dreaming of opening my ECE centre with full of wall paintings, lots of trees around and children playing, singing and dancing in the courtyard”. These statements not only demonstrate their excitement about infusing elements of Warli culture in their teaching but strong commitment for development of self esteem among the Warli children about their indigenous cultural background.

#### ➤ **Teacher Induction**

After the second semester the participants will enter in to teaching profession. So far the participants seem to be satisfied with their preparation as an ECE teacher. The “Work Integrated Model of CRECTE” based on combination of theory with intensive observation, work as a classroom assistant, and a teaching practicum have helped the participants to feel "immersed in the teaching profession" and ready to respond to students' needs. Never the less the participants seem to be apprehensive about their future induction as an ECE teacher.

Following are some of the challenges they foresee:

**Participants 2, 5 and 7** spoke about non availability of Warli children in good number for their ECE centres. They will have to open their centres in small hamlets where perhaps they may not have more than 10 children. Working with a small number of students is not at all economically feasible. The participants know that the Warli parents will not be able to pay even minimum fees for their children’s education. In that case the centre organizers will have to search for private funds or government grants which are not easy to get. Participants 1,2,4,5 and 8 expressed the fear of not accepting them as a ECE teachers by the non Warli parents. One of them said” The non tribal parents will not have confidence in us as teachers.” Another said “They may feel that how can these Warli teachers will teach our kids when they themselves know nothing”. Participants 8 and 9 felt that infusion of Warli language and cultural aspects

may drive away the non Warli parents. They said” The parents would think why to learn the Warli songs and stuff like that”. Participants 2,3 and 6 expressed their anxiety about their own capability of infusing Warli cultural practices in ECE programme. One of them said” So far our mentors and ECE teachers were by our side. We did whatever they told us and guided us. As there are no books, instructional resources for language, environment and numeracy in Warli language we will have to design everything on our own” Another two said” We wish we would have had more practice in culturally responsive teaching under the expert guidance of the teacher educators from Mumbai “. Participant 8 expressed the fear of opposition even from Warli parents to spend time in teaching Warli culture in schools. He said “Parents may say to train their children well in Marathi language so that they would perform well in elementary schools.” Never the less all the participants felt opening ECE centres in hamlets would foster the early childhood development of the Warli children. They also felt that the Warli children and the parents would certainly feel at ease in these centres.

### ➤ **Making it Work**

The decision of getting enrolled in C R E C T E programme had a definite purpose for the participants. All the nine participants are first generation literates from their families. They have deeply experienced the consequences of their parental illiteracy, poverty associated with that and low social status. Certainly the desire to improve once job prospects and enter in to upper social strata by getting teaching job was the main aims of their enrollment. The female participants also looked at this programme as an opportunity to improve their marriage prospects as educated girl stands better chance to get either educated or financially well off urban husband. Thus while getting enrolled in to C R E C T E programme they have certainly not considered the educational merits of the programme alone. Consequently they are quite determined to open their ECE centres in their localities after the completion of the programme. Getting jobs in private or government ECE centres is another option but such centres are not in sufficient number in the vicinity. To open the ECE centre and sustain it for a long time is a big challenge. It is here they need initial societal scaffold.

**Participant 2 and three** said” Our Warli people should realize the worth of our work”. They also expect trust of non Warli parents in their capability to educate their children. **Participants 1, 3 and 4** expressed the need for the strong support from the “Sarpanch (elected

head of village council), “ Police Patil) representative of local police) and the project officers of government agencies. **Participants 5,6 and 9** expressed cooperation from local banks to get lone to open the ECE centres. All the participants expressed their satisfaction about the way the C R E C T E programme is being run. But they felt that the Nareshwadi centre should keep on mentoring them even in future. **Participants 7,8 and 9** said” We should be able to get guidance of our mentors at every stage of our future work.” Participants 3, 4 and 6 said “The mentors should tell us how we should prepare documents for the banks, village council and other government agencies to open our ECE centres.”Participants 3, 4 and 7 even strongly felt that Nareshwadi centre should try for their placements as they may not be able to have their own establishments. All the participants felt that, Nareshwadi centre should time to time call them for crash training programmes and help them to get updated knowledge. Participant 2, 5 and 6 felt that it would be better if the mentors would be with them when they design all their activities of the centre. This shows that the CRECTE programme due to its short duration (one academic year) has not succeeded in development of enough confidence in the participants. They also need to provide more in depth practical inputs for their better preparation for their foreseen challenges.

### Final Thoughts

Our study of nine pre-service Warli early childhood educators revealed their shared understandings about the preparation of Warli teachers for culturally responsive early childhood education. It is evident from their voices that , there is a pressing need to prepare and support prospective Warli teachers to promote the early childhood education for Warli children and in doing so to preserve their cultural and linguistic traditions and identity. The alarming low levels of educational development among Warli community highlight how challenging their work is, and how critical is the education to perpetuating Warli language and culture, and preparing students for life success. The stories shared by our participants suggest that, while they are deeply committed to early childhood education among Warli children, they are in a great need of community support. The C R E C T E program for Warli teachers in Nareshwadi needs to be reviewed time to time to ensure that they serve the needs of Warli communities, and prepare teachers ready to embark on the professional pathway of culturally responsive early childhood education.

Finally, it is clear from the constructed meaning by the participants from their cultural identities that, there is need for teacher education programs that are deeply grounded in indigenous languages, culture, and ways of knowing. The researchers feel that , these understandings, which are consistent with a Tribal Critical Race Theory (Tribal Crit) developed by Brayboy (2005) as a theoretical frame for analyzing the problems encountered by indigenous people and developmental programs that serve these communities may help in future to analyze indigenous education and could form the basis for a re-conceptualization of indigenous teacher education programmes in Indian context.

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