



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor (RJIF): 8.4
IJAR 2024; 10(1): 17-21
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 29-11-2023
Accepted: 04-01-2024

Suruchi Sahoo

Assistant professor, School of
Education, G.M. University,
Sambalpur, Odisha, India

Jayananda Padhan

Lecturer, School of Education,
G.M. University, Sambalpur,
Odisha, India

Dr. Omkarshri Panda

Assistant professor,
Department of Education,
TEP, Rajendra University,
Bolangir, Odisha, India

Multilingual pedagogy: Context and implication for tribal education

Suruchi Sahoo, Jayananda Padhan and Dr. Omkarshri Panda

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22271/allresearch.2024.v10.i1a.11471>

Abstract

This paper intends to highlight the problems of tribal education in general and language related problems in particular. There are several academic problems of tribal students in comparison to non-tribal students. The academic problems include low enrolment rate, low retention, high dropout rate and low achievement etc. Many researchers have highlighted the political, social, cultural, historical and economic issues, but very little attention has been paid to the tribal education in the context of language especially the language of minority groups. In multilingual and multicultural situations where the presence of many languages the education gets difficult for students in relation to issues like language acquisition, comprehending concepts of contents, poor communication skills and implications in real life context. This paper focused upon issues and implications related to multilingual pedagogy in tribal education particularly in the light of language related to learners and teachers in different contexts like home, school and policy reforms.

Keywords: Multilingual pedagogy, tribal education, language context

Introduction

India has a vast diversity of different communities, languages, culture and social ethnicity. These reflect in the philosophical and educational growth of the country. The tribal communities are distinct in India having their own culture, language and life style. But behind this seemingly beautiful scenario of ST people lies a world of poverty, alienation, impoverishment, apathy and mostly illiteracy. While, education is the optimist endeavor for human development, the ST communities in India are lagging behind in this sector as a result of greater differences between tribal and non-tribal people. This difference is widening day by day and results in several issues and challenges in the education of tribal students.

The problem of tribal education is one of the core issues and challenges in front of Indian government. To create an educated ST family is a big challenge than framing policies and investing capital. Moreover, developing a culturally responsive educational policy which includes from curriculum development, appropriate pedagogy, language concerns and medium of instruction, curricular and extra-curricular activities, examination patterns, training of teachers and appointment etc. is one of a big challenge. The various discriminations as a part in Indian school system continue to replicate tribal learners in a flux most of them who are the first generation learners. The government changed its dynamics of education and shaped in the form of inclusion particularly aimed at assessing large numbers of traditionally excluded social groups into educational institutions to which in the past systematically denied access (Balagopalan and Subrahmanian, 2003) [32].

Considering inclusion of the tribal students in main stream, multilingual education stands as an urgent and vital concern in the Indian educational scenario. The National Education Policy (2020) acknowledges multilingualism as a resource in educational contexts and renews the earlier policies. It emphasizes on mother tongue-based education in elementary classrooms and provides a strong understanding of 'multilingualism' i.e. the idea that the human mind is fundamentally multilingual in nature. In a multilingual country like India where numerous languages exist and used by people, it is very difficult to address for the teachers, educators and educational policy makers to maintain an appropriate pedagogical

Corresponding Author:

Suruchi Sahoo

Assistant professor, School of
Education, G.M. University,
Sambalpur, Odisha, India

framework especially for tribal learners. Communication and language problems are one of the major issues in tribal education (Panda and Behera, 2023) ^[21]. A new, but substantial paradigm of multilingual pedagogy in the context of Indian learners and specifically for tribal learners needed to be discussed.

Constitutional Obligations and Policy Directions: Tribal education and language

If we take a look at education policy since independence, in order to understand the place tribes and other marginalized groups hold, the nature of affirmative action for disadvantaged groups and the reforms proposed to address historical and current unequal structures. As for the classification of Adivasi groups as Scheduled Tribes, Article 342 (1 and 2) of the Constitution lays out the context in which 'tribal' groups can be notified as Scheduled Tribes. The tribal communities have their indigenous culture and language which make them unique from rest of the population in India.

Accordingly, the Parliament can determine the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) from time to time. Similarly, the provisions for administration of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes have been incorporated in the Fifth and Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.²⁸ Taking stock of the education of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), the position paper developed by National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) states that the main challenge before the newly independent Indian state was to address the historical wrongs through policy measures in education. "In its effort to offset educational and socio-historical disadvantage, the Indian State conceived a range of enabling provisions that would facilitate access to and ensure retention of SC and ST children in school." Provision of basic access remained the priority during initial Five Year plans with considerable expansion of enabling interventions after the Fourth Plan. The following constitutional provisions are useful in thinking about the guarantee of education for tribal people. In more general terms, the fundamental right to education has been incorporated under Article 21A of the Constitution and mother tongue education for minority groups is ensured under Article 350A. Articles 15 (4), 29 (1 and 2), 30 (1, 1A and 2) and 46 of the Indian Constitution contain the State's commitment to education of SC/ST children. For instance, Article 15 highlights the State's commitment for the advancement of "...socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes." Cultural and educational rights of the minorities have been protected under Articles 29 (1 and 2) and 30 (1, 1A and 2) including the right to set up educational institutions. Finally, Article 45 focuses on the promotion of "educational and economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections."

Post-Independence Tribal Education

After independence in 1947, language-in-education decisions were not simple given the demands of the diverse inhabitants of the states and diverse opinions throughout the new nation. Various commissions and committees were appointed to address language and different education related issues. Lots of historical decisions are made by the Indian nation concerning language, education, and linguistic

minorities up to the revisions of the Three-Language Formula etc. In its principle, many policies promoted the use of minority languages. Provincial governments were not to force minorities into linguistic conformity; however, at the same time, the voices of minorities often went unheard (Ekbote 1984) ^[12]. Recently, 2005 National Curriculum Framework (NCERT 2005) ^[18] makes a clear statement regarding the importance of providing mother tongue education for all. While many policy advances have been made regarding the use of minority languages in education, most of the national decisions may be seen only as suggestions. The role of the national government comes in uniting the support of the states, coordinating higher education institutions, persuading the elite of the importance of a particular scheme, and providing financial incentives for specific programs (Khubchandani 2001) ^[16]. The central government "does not exercise any effective control over the implementation of general education programs" (Khubchandani 1981) ^[15]. Still, national decisions regarding education do influence the decisions of states, as exemplified in the Three-Language Formula.

The Three-Language Formula

The Three-Language Formula, first presented in 1956 by the Central Advisory Board of Education, deals with acquisition planning through the selection not of media of instruction but of languages to be taught as school subjects. While the minority languages receiving attention in this article are not included among languages to be taught and my discussion of it here is necessarily brief, the formula certainly influences the education of linguistic minorities. The Three-Language Formula includes the following (according to the 1966 modifications): 1st the mother tongue or regional language, to be taught for 10 years 2nd the official language - Hindi or English, to be taught for 6 years, minimum 3rd another modern Indian or foreign language, to be taught for 3 years, minimum.

The multilingualism promoted in the Three-Language Formula springs in part from a concern for maintaining the status of the official and regional languages, and for ensuring that Indians from various regions would learn one another's languages. Concern continues in India for the maintenance and spread of the official Indian languages which includes a concern that the spread of English and the increasing demand for English-medium education threatens the acquisition of Indian languages. While overall a broad consensus exists among states, implementation of the Three-Language Formula varies considerably. According to Ekbote (1984) ^[12], difficulty in the implementation of the Three-Language Formula comes from the following factors: (a) the "heavy language load in the school curriculum," (b) northern schools not being motivated to teach south Indian language, (c) southern schools, especially in Tamil Nadu, resisting the teaching of Hindi, and (d) the cost of arranging for instruction. The formula has been adapted by the various states with some teaching only two languages, some needing four, and some providing additional optional languages. Even when implemented as intended, the formula has been said to have lost its symbolic value, becoming merely an examination ritual (Annamalai, 2001) ^[4]. For a summary of current implementation and lists of languages taught in the various states (Meganathan, 2011) ^[29].

With respect to the speakers of minority languages, critiques of the Three Language Formula emphasizes its failure to

distinguish between regional languages and mother tongues, thus ignoring the situation of minorities whose mother tongue is not the regional language. Under the Three-Language Formula, those students whose mother tongue is not an official or regional language end up learning four languages, and possibly three or four scripts, since they come to school with a language different from the first language of instruction. The policy has been referred to as 3 plus or minus one since Hindi speakers need only learn two languages and minority-language speakers require four (Ager 2001: 29) ^[1]. While knowing four languages should certainly not be thought of as a disadvantage, children who are educated through the medium of an unfamiliar language face greater learning challenges than their peers (Jhingran 2005) ^[13].

Multilingual instructions

In a move towards increasing decentralization on the one hand, and reduced State-provision on the other, the National Policy on Education (1986) had a set of provisions impacting tribal education.

1. Elementary schools in tribal areas a priority.
2. Curricula and instruction in tribal languages.
3. Increase in Ashram schools for tribal children.
4. Tribal youth to be encouraged to take up teaching in schools.
5. Introduction of non-formal system of schooling in tribal areas.
6. Schemes at the Centre and State levels for ST students.

The NPE (1986) brought up the idea of 'non-formal' stream of education as a viable policy option. Following NPE, local districts became important units in educational management. During this time, India's economic policy began to witness a shift from a state-interventionist model restricting foreign direct investment and foreign trade to that of liberalization of nationally controlled services. In this respect, the position paper on 'Tribal Education' prepared by members of the National Curriculum Framework (2005) ^[18] highlighted a workable direction that would involve.

1. Emphasis on multilingual education not only as instructional strategy, but also as a 'holistic approach.'
2. Textbook production, publication at large in tribal languages.
3. Curriculum needs to shift from the promoter of high culture to that of depiction of tribal life.
4. Inclusion of Tribal/ Dalit folklore, lesser known languages.

With the passage of the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, Article 21A has now been translated into legal obligation on the part of the state. In what follows, we present three significant policy initiatives of recent times that will have an impact on education among tribal people. Right to Education (RTE) Passed in 2009, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) provides for free and compulsory education for children between the ages 6 and 14. The Act includes a range of measures that are important in thinking of education of the disadvantaged communities.

1. Local authority is responsible for providing education.
2. Steps to be taken to enroll drop-out students in age appropriate classes.
3. Infrastructural support including buildings, learning materials.

4. Necessary teaching support including well trained teachers.
5. Establishment of norms for teacher training and certification.
6. Greater role of School Management Committees in: A) monitoring the workings of the school b) Recommending school development plan c) Monitoring grants.
7. Comprehensive Quality Enhancement plans for ST areas.

While RTE fulfills the constitutional mandate and provides ground for recognizing education to be 'non-purchasable' and a 'right for all', some provisions in the Act raise concerns. Fixed norms about school infrastructure, greater standardization of teaching, recruitment, teacher education and credentials are cases in point. Given that an alternative, sustainable vision of tribes and Tribal pedagogy opposes standardization and regimentation of learning.

Implementation Issues and Multilingual Classroom Pedagogy Practices with Reference to Tribal Education

In India, educational facilities do not seem to be evenly distributed in all sections of the society (Gupta, 2006) ^[33]. Amongst these indigenous people, the gross enrolment ratio in higher education is 9.5%. The enrolment ratio of males is 12.4% and that of females is 6.7% (Higher and Technical Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development Report, 2007-08). Undoubtedly, they have outgrown in the recent years with the help of the efforts by the government. The literacy rate amongst tribal has increased from 8.53% in 1961 to 58.96% in 2011 while the corresponding increase of the total population was from 28.305 in 1961 to 72.99% in 2011 (Statistical Profile of the Scheduled tribes in India, 2013 Ministry of Tribal affairs, Statistics Division, Govt. Of India) Male-female gap in literacy rate decreased from 24.41 percentage points in 2001 to 19.18 percentage points in 2011 for STs. Among the States, Mizoram and Lakshadweep have highest literacy rate for STs, while lowest was seen in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Ten states have literacy rate less than the country's average (58.96%) for ST population and Odisha ranks 5th amongst them (Census, 2011).

In 1976 there were reported to be 33 tribal languages in use as media of instruction in schools (Pattanayak 2001) ^[22]. In 1981, Khubchandani (1981) ^[15] reported that a total of 80 languages were being used as media of instruction in India. In 2001, Annamalai reported 47 languages used as media of instruction, and Singh (2008) ^[30] reported that there are 34 languages used in schools in India. Meanwhile, the researcher Jhingran (2005) ^[13] states that less than 20 languages are being used for media of instruction in primary education. Several Indian states have implemented the use of minority languages as "preparatory medium" or "partial medium" (Khubchandani 2001) ^[16]. Besides state provisions, some tribal schools have been formed by the national Education Department and some by the Welfare Department, while other mother-tongue education programs have been promoted by NGOs.

Even when mother - tongue education policies and programs are initiated, implementation problems often hinder the use of minority languages in education. Program implementation suffers from inefficiencies due to few inspections, absent teachers, unavailability of texts, and

alienation from the home language (Pradhan and Pattanayak 2012) ^[24]. According to Dua (1985) ^[31], the use of minority languages in education faces implementation problems, not due to lack of student motivation and ability or from the parents' devaluation of such instruction, but from pedagogic, environmental and curricular problems. The use of tribal languages in the first few years of education is not an automatic solution to educational problems for linguistic minorities. As Pattanayak (2001) ^[22] says: "With inexperienced teachers and insufficient reading materials these programs are apologies for education." Contributing to the problem are literacy materials with very little practical village content and little that would be motivational for learners, as well as the lack of planning for transitions from one language to another in the school. Other hindrances to program implementation spring from mistrust, as some administrators fear more demands from minority groups and community members fear loss of access to the languages of power (Annamalai, 1990) ^[3]. He also points out that bilingual education faces more resistance when it is centrally planned than when it is used informally, a part of the multilingualism common in society.

Although this historical account has highlighted multiple challenges, mother tongue education for linguistically minoritized groups boasts some success stories in recent years. Currently several states, including Andhra Pradesh, Odisha (formerly Orissa), and Chhattisgarh, are giving attention to mother tongue instruction for tribal minorities, sometimes in collaboration with NGOs. The motivation is primarily to provide adequate educational support to populations that have experienced high rates of educational failure and drop-out. Such tribal minorities are considered quite distinct from the speakers of so-called dialects of Hindi or other regional languages.

Evaluations of these programs report numerous positive outcomes for the use of mother tongue beyond academic performance (e.g., NCERT 2011) ^[19]. Looking beyond program implementation to micro-level decisions about language use in the classroom reveals another layer of language planning in India. The multilingualism that has been observed in educational settings in India outside of official policy deserves some consideration. Khubchandani (1981) ^[15] notes that "in actual practice one notices a good deal of code-switching and hybridization of two or more contact languages in informal teaching settings" (31). Multilingual teachers can adapt to the needs of their students, and various forms of multilingualism become evident in the Indian classroom. According to Khubchandani (2001) ^[16]

Agnihotri (2007) ^[2] has suggested a more structured way of using multilingual resources in instruction, building on the linguistic resources of the students and allowing them to use the language they know best in building their understanding. He says: Any classroom in India is in general multilingual, and unless we conceptualize the school curriculum, syllabus, textbooks and classroom transaction in terms of multilingualism as a resource, strategy and a goal, where languages are not seen as discrete objects and language boundaries are porous, we may not be able to arrive at a pedagogical breakthrough where an individual child's language and systems of knowledge are respected. (Agnihotri 2007, p. 197) ^[2] Such an approach reflects current conversations about the use of plurallingual forms of communication in education, whether labelled

translanguaging, transliteracy, plural language practices, or polylingual languaging (Baker 2003; Creese and Martin 2003; Garcí'a and Wei 2014; Jorgensen 2008) ^[6, 10, 34, 14]. Whether natural de facto multilingual education can provide an effective bridge between access to education through the mother tongue and access to higher education and economic advancement though the more powerful languages remains to be seen. This question too is not without its controversies, and India's multilingual classroom practices deserve further exploration

Conclusion

Through this analysis of India's linguistic diversity, policy and recommendations by the govt. it cannot be assured an organic linkage with the tribal education so far as language policy and other schemes are concerned. There is no basic service for a comprehensive attempt to understand education as a different sub culture and linguistic complex in developing a model which is culturally suited to educational programs especially for the tribal children. The current tribal education faces two major issues 1. Language policy and implementation issue and 2. Quality of delivery (Pedagogic).

From a synthetic perspective, the study opines to improve the quality of education a fresh focus on culture and geographically specific tribal education policies as the need of the hour. Also this study found that required changes need to be incorporated in the methodology of teaching and curriculum to enhance the learning ability, emotional ability, cognitive ability, and personality development of the tribal students in the local language. Multi lingual pedagogy, post methods and local language specific medium of instruction should be initiated from grass-root level. The study may also touch upon teachers' new role as mentor in the schools. Additional analysis that will aid in understanding the theoretical and practical hurdles in the previous interventions is also the need of the hour.

Funding Details

For the present paper, no financial support has been received from any person or agency. This is an outcome of self-funding by the authors.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest is reported.

References

1. Ager D. Motivation in language planning and language policy. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters; c2001.
2. Agnihotri RK. Identity and multilinguality: The case of India. In: Tsui ABM, Tollefson JW, editors. Language policy, culture and identity in Asian contexts. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum; c2007. p. 185-204.
3. Annamalai E. Dimensions of bilingual education in India. New Language Planning Newsletter. 1990;4(4):1-3.
4. Annamalai E. Managing multilingualism in India: Political and linguistic manifestation. Vol. 8. New Delhi, India: Sage; c2001.
5. Bailey T, van Riezen K, van Riezen I. A sociolinguistic and educational survey of Kumaun. SIL International: Research Report; c1999.
6. Baker C. Bilingual and transliteracy in Wales: Language planning and the Welsh National Curriculum.

- In: Hornberger NH, editor. *Continua of biliteracy: An ecological framework for educational policy, research, and practice in multilingual settings*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters; c2003. p. 71-90.
7. Census of India. Part II-C (ii) language tables. Government of India, 1961, 1.
 8. Census of India; c2008. Available from: <http://www.censusindia.net/>; [cited 2003 Apr 21, 2008 Feb 11].
 9. Census of India. Paper No. 1: Languages-1951 census. Government of India; c1954.
 10. Creese A, Martin P, editors. *Multilingual classroom ecologies: Inter-relationships, interactions and ideologies*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters; c2003.
 11. Das Gupta J. *Language conflict and national development*. Berkeley: University of California Press; c1970.
 12. Ekbote G. *A nation without a national language*. Hyderabad: Hindi Prachar Sabha; c1984.
 13. Jhingran D. *Language disadvantage: The learning challenge in primary education*. New Delhi: S. B. Nangia APH; c2005.
 14. Jorgensen JN. Polylingual languaging around and among children and adolescents. *International Journal of Multilingualism*. 2008;5(3):161-176.
 15. Khubchandani LM. *Multilingual education in India*. Pune: Center for Communication Studies; c1981.
 16. Khubchandani LM. *Language demography and language education*. In: Daswani CJ, editor. *Language education in multilingual India*. New Delhi: UNESCO; c2001.
 17. Khubchandani LM. *Mother-tongue education in plurilingual contexts*. Paper presented at the Educational Linguistics Forum Brown Bag, Philadelphia, PA; c2005 Oct 7.
 18. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). *National curriculum framework 2005*. New Delhi: NCERT; c2005.
 19. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). *Program evaluation report: Multilingual education Orissa*. New Delhi: NCERT; c2011.
 20. Panda A. *Impact of Mother Tongue based (MTB) Education in Tribal dominated schools of Odisha*. *IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*. 2020;25(2):13-18.
 21. Panda M, Behera G. *Tribal education-current scenario with future prospects*. *International Journal of Advance and Applied Research*. 2023;4(24):34-40. Available from: www.researchgate.net; [cited date].
 22. Pattanayak DP. *Tribal languages in education*. In: Daswani CJ, editor. *Language education in multilingual India*. New Delhi: UNESCO; c2001.
 23. Pattanayak DP. *Mother tongue: The problem of definition*. In: Ouane A, editor. *Towards a multilingual culture of education*. Hamburg: UNESCO Institute of Education; c2003.
 24. Pradhan P, Pattanayak J. *Challenges in Education of Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe Children: Case Study of an Ashram School*. *The Ravenshaw Journal of Educational Studies*. 2012;1(1):23-32.
 25. Rajagopalan S. *State and nation in South Asia*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers; c2001.
 26. Ramanathan V. *The English-vernacular divide: Postcolonial language politics and practice*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2005a, 49.
 27. Ramanathan V. *Rethinking language planning and policy from the ground up: Refashioning institutional realities and human lives*. *Current Issues in Language Planning*. 2005b;6(2):89-101.
 28. Sarkar PK. *Scheduled tribes (ST) students: Challenge & development*. *Brazilian Journal of Science*. 2023;2(10):86-91.
 29. Meganathan R. *Language Policy in Education and the Role of English in India: From Library Language to Language of Empowerment*. Online Submission; c2011.
 30. Singh SK. *Role of leadership in knowledge management: A study*. *Journal of knowledge management*. 2008 Jul 18;12(4):3-15.
 31. Dua VK, Goso K, Dube VE, Bush CA. *Characterization of lacto-N-hexaose and two fucosylated derivatives from human milk by high-performance liquid chromatography and proton NMR spectroscopy*. *Journal of Chromatography A*. 1985 Jan 1;328:259-69.
 32. Balagopalan S, Subrahmanian R. *Dalit and Adivasi children in schools: some preliminary research themes and findings*. *IDS bulletin (Brighton)*. 1984. 2003 Jan 1;34(1):43-54.
 33. Gupta AK, Smith KG, Shalley CE. *The interplay between exploration and exploitation*. *Academy of management journal*. 2006 Aug 1;49(4):693-706.
 34. Hou H, Wang L, Gao F, Wei G, Zheng J, Tang B, *et al*. *Hierarchically porous TiO₂/SiO₂ fibers with enhanced photocatalytic activity*. *Rsc. Advances*. 2014;4(38):19939-19944.