

CHAPTER-32

Language education and NEP-2020: opportunities and challenges in tribal communities as living knowledge systems

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ABSTRACT

The use of language is very important for education and the maintenance of culture among tribal people who are allied with the forest and its culture. However, it depends on the situation, as educational institutions have tended to neglect the use of tribes' mother tongues and prefer state languages only. In many tribal areas, especially forest regions. Language is not only a tool of communication but also a source of knowledge about plants, animals, seasons, healing practices, and everyday life. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to address issues related to mother-tongue-based learning in the early years, through multilingual learning, and the inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS). This study examines the problems and prospects of language education under the NEP-2020, with emphasis on tribal populations in India. The research treats tribal languages as systems of living knowledge linked to folk and oral knowledge.

The study finds that NEP-2020 gives an important opportunity to recognize tribal languages as valuable learning resources rather than barriers to education. It also allows for the inclusion of local culture and ecological knowledge in teaching. However, many challenges remain, such as a shortage of trained teachers, a lack of learning materials in tribal languages, weak infrastructure in tribal areas, and gaps between policy goals and actual practice. Language education among tribal populations requires solid institutional backing and active community involvement, along with their folkloric systems of knowledge.

Keywords: Tribal Languages, Language Education, NEP-2020, Living Knowledge Systems, Indigenous Knowledge,

1. Introduction

There are some countries with large numbers of languages; among them, India is one of the largest countries in the world, with hundreds of languages belonging to families such as the Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, and Tibeto-Burman. However, tribal groups are an essential part of the country's linguistic landscape, with many languages closely tied to nature and culture, which makes the ecological wisdom. This is especially true for tribal communities that remain closely associated with forest lands (Haseena & Mohammed, 2014). The Census of India (2011) confirms that Scheduled Tribes represent representing 8.6% of the country's total population, many of whom still live in forests, hills, and other ecologically vulnerable areas, where language plays a key role in their lives. Language is not just for communication

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but also for expressing relationships with the environment, historical and cultural knowledge, values, and practices. Tribal languages are knowledge systems as they store information on forests, plants, animals, seasons, and survival skills. The knowledge is typically passed on orally through stories, songs, rituals, proverbs, and work as traditional knowledge from ancestors. Many children learn through observation and participation in tasks such as gathering forest products, recognizing plants and trees, observing seasons, weather patterns, and animal behaviour. Through this process, language is used to create, retain, and pass on knowledge (Prema, 2013).

These systems of knowledge are practical, experiential, and holistic. They do not draw sharp distinctions between language, ecology, culture, and livelihood; instead, they link these elements of life into a holistic knowledge system. Tribal settlements may have extensive knowledge of plants and medicines, soil, water, animal migration, and other seasonal cycles. However, even though such forms of knowledge are rich and useful, they are often neglected in education. Contemporary education systems favor written, standardized, and textbook-based forms of knowledge and devalue oral, community, and experiential knowledge.

According to Battiste (2002), excluding indigenous knowledge from educational systems destroys culture and community. It may lead to a feeling of aloneness from school and society. Educational programs in school settings often provide standardized information that may not always apply to the lives of the tribe. In contrast, the indigenous knowledge of the forest, medicine, farming, and community structuring goes unrefined.

In terms of language rights, the inability to educate children in their own mother tongues can also result in institutionalized inequalities and diminish cultural pride. Historical factors have also influenced this marginalization. In colonial times, tribal communities were displaced from their forests and lands. This affected not only the keeping of tribal people but also their ways of learning and acquiring knowledge. Colonial methods of teaching and learning replaced native tribal forms of learning. Though efforts were made during post-colonial rule to improve educational facilities through education policies and parliamentary bills, tribal people still lagged behind other communities, particularly those living in remote forest areas (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

Another issue here is the diversity of tribal peoples. Tribal communities should not be viewed as homogeneous groups. Rather, tribal communities include many distinct communities with different languages, dialects, traditions, and cultures. In many places, there are many dialects of a particular language, and tribal languages mix with other languages as well. Tribal languages in many areas have influences from Malayalam, Tamil, and Kannada in Kerala.

Further, a lack of awareness of rights to language, education, and institutional support can undermine the success of policies. A few more languages that fall under the category of threatened languages are the movement toward using regional languages for education, social mobility, and job creation, which is causing the loss of several languages spoken by different tribes. This language loss is more than just the loss of a language, because a whole lot of other aspects come along with it. Languages and dialects are at risk due to social and educational transformations (Prema, 2013).

For many tribal communities, the language they speak is a testament to their attention to detail in the forest. Often, children learn how to identify herbs, roots, leaves, and barks through elders outside of school. Children acquire knowledge about which plants can be eaten, which cannot, and which animals might be around through their day-to-day encounters and observations. However, as soon as they enrol in school, such knowledge slowly ends. Instead, they must assimilate the textbooks and external ideas, often through a new language. This provides a

disconnect between school and real life.

In the years since, the NEP 2020 policy has attempted to address some of the issues raised. The priority given to mother tongue-based education is one example, especially at the elementary level. The NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of multilingual education in line with the country's linguistic diversity. These provisions are especially important for tribal societies, as they open up opportunities to integrate local languages and traditions, oral knowledge, and ecological knowledge into the education system. NEP-2020 is a step ahead of previous policies in recognizing that children learn in their native languages and cultural settings. When put into practice, the policy will bridge the home-school divide, enhance learning, and promote cultural continuity. It can also provide a pathway to shift the "one size fits all" approach to a more locally responsive education system.

However, there are some issues. Tribal areas often lack adequate infrastructure, teachers, transportation, and materials in tribal languages. However, there may exist a gap between policy and its implementation. Moreover, implementing mother-tongue education in tribal communities speaking different languages will require institutional backing and long-term planning. Earlier research on tribal education has been predominantly focused on issues such as accessibility, literacy, dropouts, and welfare programs. These matters are very important; however, another equally important factor has not received much attention in earlier research. This factor is linked to tribal languages. Likewise, the associations between language, biodiversity knowledge, and education policy are not well understood. This paper differs from many previous studies that focus largely on tribal education in terms of literacy or welfare by considering tribal languages as an educational and ecological resource. Contributions of this study to this debate include exploring the role of tribal languages as knowledge systems and the potentials and difficulties of utilizing such languages in language teaching under NEP-2020. Instead of viewing tribal languages as barriers to development, this study proposes that they should be included as an educational resource. This research has three aims. First, it explores the connections between language, knowledge, and education in tribal societies in India. Second, it examines the potential and promise of the NEP-2020 in imparting mother-tongue education. Third, it discusses how tribal languages, as sources of ecological and cultural knowledge, can be used in education. A better educational framework could be built by considering tribal languages as systems of knowledge by the inclusion of tribal peoples. This would be important not only for improving educational standards but also for preserving the ecological and cultural knowledge of India's tribes.

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

This research builds on the belief that tribal languages are more than just a means of communication; they are also knowledge systems. For many tribal communities, language embodies ecological knowledge, culture, identity, and know-how that have evolved in interactive ways with forests, land, and life. Knowledge, here, is not limited to books or formal knowledge production and dissemination; it is experienced, practiced, and shared through speech, oral communication, rituals, and participation. The view that emerges brings together the ideas of vernacularity, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), indigenous epistemologies, language and identity, and community-based learning. Vernacularity is one way of understanding the emergence of local languages. Vernacular languages reflect the social and ecological life-worlds of communities and cannot be completely translated into mainstream languages. For example, in tribal settings, language is oriented towards forests, animals, plants, soil, weather, and seasons. Local words often have practical implications: a name for a plant may indicate that it is medicinal, a name for a landscape may indicate that it has water, and a

name for an animal may indicate that the environment is changing. This illustrates that language is communicative but also memorial and epistemic - it is a medium for accumulating, organizing, and sharing knowledge. The study of India's linguistic diversity has always stressed the memories, perspectives, and social knowledge stored in languages (Fatima, 2025).

Tribal knowledge systems (TKS) form an important component of IKS. They are based on natural, livelihood, and social relations. They often include knowledge of medicinal plants, seed saving, shifting cultivation, water resources, forest trails, weather signs, and healing. Tribal knowledge has a holistic nature, unlike formal education, which often compartmentalizes knowledge into different subjects. Ecology, spirituality, economy, and ethics are not considered independent of one another. This imparts tribal knowledge systems with unique educational significance and makes them relevant to local development and sustainability (Battiste, 2002).

Tribal knowledge is becoming increasingly relevant to debates on biodiversity, climate change, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Kerala, tribals exemplify the strong connection between language and environment. Their languages (mostly Dravidian) have words for medicinal plants, edible roots, forest habitats, animal trails, and seasons. In many communities, elders pass on knowledge of useful tubers, poisonous plants, weather, and seasons through social interactions and participation. Studies of tribal languages in Kerala also highlight that some of these languages are facing the stage of diminishing, and that the environmental and cultural knowledge tied to them is likewise endangered (Prema, 2013).

Another large body of literature on tribal education in India notes the language divide. Tribal mother tongues are not being used in the majority of schools. This creates a "language gap" between the home language and the language of instruction, which is hard for first-generation students to understand. Not understanding the language used as the medium of instruction will lead to low self-esteem, non-participation in class, and poor performance in school. In the end, this contributes to low attendance and higher dropout rates among tribal students (Haseena & Mohammed, 2014). Clearly, language acts as an institutional variable in creating education-related inequality. It is also an issue of language justice as children who do not get the right to education in their mother tongue often face structural injustice (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

The literature also notes that the educational deficiencies of tribal communities are associated with social inequities. The tribal community areas experience educational deficiencies due to a lack of schools, teachers, transportation, sanitation facilities, and internet connectivity. There are limitations for teachers regarding language and culture within the tribal community; therefore, there are still barriers to teaching and communication. In terms of infrastructure development within the tribal community, the literature indicates that an inclusion strategy involving local planning is needed (Patra et al., 2025).

The exclusion of languages from education was due to the education system's discriminatory nature. The process of colonization displaced tribal people living in the forests from their lands. In this regard, traditional education methods were lost because they involved engaging students in learning activities within their local environments. Colonial models of education, as well as state-based models that followed after independence, ignored traditional forms of imparting knowledge among tribal communities because of their displacement from their lands and marginalization. From a decolonial perspective, incorporating tribal languages into education undermines the power of externally imposed knowledge systems and revalidates community knowledge systems (Battiste, 2002).

Language is integral to communities' memories, sense of identity, and continuity. The culture of the tribe is upheld through oral tradition, ritualized ways of speaking, songs, toponymy,

forms of address, and kinship ties. The extinction of the language among younger generations results in forgetting and a disconnect between generations. The study on tribal cultural identity states that the education system that does not acknowledge tribal languages will increase identity loss (Panna, 2022).

Oral traditions and folk knowledge are also integral to this. Tribal cultures may transmit knowledge and wisdom through stories, songs, riddles, proverbs, myths, and rituals. These convey ethics, environmental, technical, and historical knowledge. An example of an oral piece of literature that can serve to educate about the importance of caution and balance in nature could be a story of a jungle animal; another could be a harvest song that passes on instructions regarding when to plant crops; yet another could be rituals teaching proper water/plant harvesting techniques. Oral knowledge continues to play a role in social and ecological smartness, as shown in tribal literature (Sharma, 2022).

This research is relevant for the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The policy prioritizes mother tongue education in the early years of learning, multilingualism, experiential learning, and Indian Knowledge Systems. This recognizes that children are more effective in a known linguistic environment, and the education process must also be contextualized (Ministry of Education, 2020). This offers a great opportunity for tribes to integrate their languages, oral traditions, and ecological knowledge into education.

However, there are major barriers to implementation. Teachers, community participation, curricula, and resource allocation are required for mother tongue education. For tribal groups, the process of script selection, dialect standardization, and content modification can be complicated. Furthermore, schools still operate under centralized models that offer little room for knowledge systems. Consequently, there is a disconnect between education policies and practices.

While much of the research has focused on tribal literacy, access to education, and welfare, there is limited research on tribal languages as an ecology of knowledge and education. Language and ecology are often isolated rather than integrated aspects of learning. This research fills in these gaps by offering a conceptual framework of tribal language as a space between knowledge, identity, and education.

This work conceptualizes tribal language as a three-fold entity: Language as Knowledge (ecology, health, economy), Language as Identity (memory, identity, continuity), and Language as Education (learning, participation, inclusion). The main thrust of this paper is not to perceive tribal languages as impediments to development and modernization. They should instead be considered as resources that will make education accessible to all, including cultural preservation and sustainable development. The approach follows the NEP-2020 vision of providing context-appropriate education to tribes.

Methodology

The purpose of the methodology is to conceptualize the interconnections among tribal languages, education, and the knowledge system, rather than undertaking primary field research. This research uses a non-fieldwork qualitative research design grounded in an interdisciplinary framework of folkloristics, anthropology, education, and language. This methodology is appropriate for the research, which involves analysing policy and existing theoretical and empirical knowledge about tribal communities in India.

This study is purely secondary research. These include peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, government agency reports, census reports, institutional reports, and policy documents such as the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. researcher also accessed studies on tribal education, multilingualism, indigenous knowledge systems, language endangerment, and tribals in Kerala. Preference was given to reliable, relevant sources that focused on

language, culture, education, and policy.

This paper allowed the research to establish a theoretical foundation and identify key issues, trends, and gaps. The collected information was examined using thematic analysis, a qualitative approach that identifies and analyses themes within texts. By repeatedly reading and comparing the sources, various themes were discovered and classified into the following categories: tribal languages as a knowledge system, language and identity, ecological knowledge, language shift, educational exclusion, multilingual education, and institutional problems. The research aims to make sense of emerging trends and to offer an academic voice informed by its research on the role of tribal languages in education, and to engage critically with tribal languages as living knowledge systems. It lays the groundwork for examining the role of language-sensitive education in advancing inclusion, cultural continuity, and sustainability within the NEP-2020.

2. Discussion and Findings

2.1 Ecology, Living Knowledge Systems and Language

The results of this study show how tribal languages are intricately linked to ecology, livelihoods, and life. For many tribal communities, especially forest-dwelling communities, language not only helps them communicate but also interpret and perceive their natural world. Language is used to maintain knowledge of forests, herbs and roots, animal behaviour, sources of water, weather, and seasons. This information is passed down from generation to generation through oral modes, songs, rituals, stories, and by actively engaging in day-to-day activities.

This research supports the claim that indigenous languages are knowledge systems. Language is used to transmit practical knowledge gained from long-term experiences of certain ecological niches. The name of a particular plant may suggest its medicinal properties, or the local term may indicate rainfall, soil conditions, or animal migration. Thus, language is used to communicate and know. The exclusion of these knowledges from the education system also means that an opportunity to educate on the environment, biodiversity, and sustainability is lost. Language and the Exclusionary Practices in Education is one of the key insights of this research: that language and experience are not recognized by formal education. The education institutions in the tribes are founded on the major language in a particular area or state.

On the other hand, children will use their native language when communicating at home. In this scenario, an issue arises in which the languages used in educational institutions do not match those used by children at home. This is a cause of low academic achievement, attendance, and increased drop-out rates among tribal students (Haseena & Mohammed, 2014). So, this is not just a language problem but also a structural problem. Exclusionary education fails to take into account a child's language, culture, and knowledge. The knowledge of children with rich forms of community knowledge is often labelled as deficient because their learning is not in sync with the educational system. This shows that there are economic, linguistic, and epistemological inequalities in tribal education.

For instance, in the Western Ghats area in Kerala, reality on the ground links language and education through language's relationship to subsistence and biodiversity. In their languages, there is vocabulary related to medicinal plants, edible forest products, forest paths, animal and bird behaviour, and seasons. Elders in most villages teach their children how to recognize edible plants, avoid toxic plants, find water, and interpret bird and animal tracks. They may learn about forest routes (honey gathering, harvesting, and other seasonal activities) through observation and teaching. However, this knowledge and learning are not acknowledged in the school system. Instead, children are exposed to unfamiliar textbook material and to instances of using dominant languages. It results in a decontextualized learning experience, less motivation, and a lower sense of the relevance of school.

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The study of Language Change and Identity, Memory and Continuity also provide evidence that language is intimately related to identity, memory, and community. Oral forms such as folktales, songs, ceremonies, kinship terms, and place-names have been used to preserve tribal cultures. They contain historical information and foster cohesion. With time, young individuals will opt to learn in prevalent languages for educational and job purposes or through mass media. Therefore, they could lose interest in their cultural modes of communication. Studies show several tribal languages in Kerala are threatened and in the process of dying out (Prema, 2013). This suggests a connection between language loss and cultural and ecological factors. Language loss may lead to a loss of knowledge about healing and biodiversity, oral traditions, and ethical relations with place and the environment. This is especially true of the younger generation due to pressure to assimilate into mainstream society, migration, and digital media.

2.2. Opportunities and Policy Gap under NEP-2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an opportunity to reimagine tribal education in India. Education in the mother tongue, multilingual education, experiential learning, and Indian Knowledge Systems are key aspects supported by the policy framework (Ministry of Education, 2020). All these are especially relevant in the case of tribal groups because they understand the importance of teaching children in a language and culture they understand. If taken seriously, NEP-2020 will help bridge the "home-school gap" and enhance classroom interactions and cultural identity. It also opens up opportunities to incorporate tribal knowledge, history, and culture into the curriculum in ways that allow tribal ecological knowledge to be shared. This is a departure from standardized education to a more contextually relevant and inclusive approach.

As progressive as the NEP-2020 is, the study reveals significant gaps between policy and reality. Although NEP-2020 makes general statements on language inclusion, it sometimes does not explicitly discuss how this will be achieved for the diverse tribal languages. Many tribal schools lack qualified teachers, particularly in tribal languages and cultures. Insufficient textbooks, learning resources, and teacher resources are also available in tribal languages. In multilingual villages, the choice of script, the handling of dialect diversity, and the development of curriculum materials in tribal languages are challenging. Moreover, many tribal areas are remote and continue to experience poor road networks, transportation infrastructure, low digital connectivity (internet), and inadequate school infrastructure (Patra et al., 2025). This minimizes the effectiveness of policy change. The other issue is that policies tend to homogenize tribal populations, rather than considering their diversity. The needs of tribal India cannot be addressed through a "one size fits all" approach. Progress towards culturally responsive education indicates that a community-based, culturally responsive approach is needed to improve tribal education. There needs to be an emphasis on the tribal mother tongue in early education. Multilingual, culturally responsive, and inclusive education should be provided to teachers in tribal areas. Employing tribal teachers can result in better communication, trust, and engagement. Curricular resources should also include local narratives, oral traditions, knowledge about local biodiversity, and history.

The knowledge and skills of tribal elders and other local knowledge holders can serve as educational resources to bridge formal education with the community. This will enhance the relevance, participatory nature, and dignity of education with respect to local knowledge. Education in tribal areas should not be limited to literacy levels and test scores. It should also enable identity, environmental awareness, language pride, and empowerment. The issue is not just the addition of language to the system, but the shift in education to a more socially equitable and culturally relevant approach. This research shows that tribal languages are inherently linked to ecology, culture, and life. By ignoring these languages in education, there will be a

disconnection between education and its practical application. The NEP-2020 is an attempt in the right direction, but it needs to be implemented in reality by involving institutions and communities. The concept of considering tribal languages as “living knowledge” can help achieve this.

3. Suggestions

Drawing from the insights of this study, several Policy and practical steps are needed to improve language education amongst tribal communities in India as part of the National Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020). These tips aim to align the Policy and practice and facilitate inclusive, relevant, and sustainable education. Here, Mother Tongue-based Early Education on Tribal mother tongues should be the medium of instruction at least in the early and primary years of education. Early education in children's mother tongue is critical for their learning (Ministry of Education, 2020). Early literacy and learning in tribal languages can enhance understanding and retention, confidence, participation, and engagement. Sequential models can then be adopted to introduce regional and national languages without affecting the mother tongue. Tribal Language Teaching-Learning Material. There is a dire need for the development of textbooks, primers, dictionaries, storybooks, and other learning materials in tribal languages. These should be culturally and context-specific. For example, for communities in the Western Ghats of Kerala, these could include local folklore, knowledge of biodiversity, local stories, and the words used in everyday life in the forests. A lack of learning resources is one of the barriers to multilingual education.

Teachers in tribal areas should be recruited and trained in multilingual education, intercultural communication, and sensitivity to the parent community environment. Wherever possible, teachers should be drawn from local communities, as they will have an understanding of local languages, cultures, and the needs of local learners. Further training can help teachers adjust their teaching practices to accommodate linguistic diversity. In Tribal knowledge systems, oral practices, health care, agricultural practices, and environmental ethics should be acknowledged in school curricula. Medicine, seasons, water, animal behavior, and forest management practices related to medicinal plants, water scarcity, weather patterns, and forest conservation can be incorporated into the curricula of environmental science, language, and social science classes. This would be in line with the National Education Policy-2020 (NEP-2020) focus on Indian Knowledge Systems.

Local Community in Schooling. For effective education reform in tribal areas, communities need to be involved. These include inviting elders, storytellers, artisans, and other members of these communities as resource persons. They can help bridge school education with the world, facilitate intergenerational learning, and build trust between schools and communities. **Curriculum and Policy Tailored to Local Conditions.** Every tribe has its own distinct identity. There is a unique history behind how people communicate, conduct themselves, and observe their culture. Given these differences, it is not possible to apply universal strategies to education systems. Rather, curricula, languages, and pedagogic strategies should be adapted to fit local circumstances. This can be done by adjusting the elements listed above. **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Although rural areas are typically farther from major cities, they still suffer from poor road networks, inadequate public transport, poorly built classrooms, and unreliable internet services. To ensure equal Access, improved school infrastructure will play a crucial role in increasing enrolment, as better infrastructure tends to lead to higher enrolment (Patra et al., 2025). When forests occupy much of the area, ensuring the delivery of books, shelter, internet access, and transportation is essential. It should no longer be put off for later, but start right now by addressing current issues.

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Preservation of Languages: Documentation of endangered indigenous languages must be undertaken immediately before they are lost forever. To record and document these languages, cooperation between the tribes and outside organizations, whether government or universities, will be required. Storytelling, music, language itself, ceremonial performance, and descriptions of nature can be used to preserve linguistic diversity. When the task is conducted under the guidance of native speakers, schools will benefit from a wider range of materials that help preserve cultural heritage (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). **Monitoring and Accountability:** Sometimes, monitoring the implementation of NEP-2020 in tribal lands may be necessary. However, the focus here will not be on enrolment rates and grades; rather, attention should be paid to language assistance, cultural fit, involvement, and the presence of an audience.

4. Conclusion

The present study explores the interconnections among language, education, and tribes in India, focusing on indigenous languages as carriers of knowledge. It has been proven that many areas occupied by tribal populations contain languages that convey knowledge of forests, flora, fauna, weather cycles, treatment practices, and daily activities. These languages hold ancient wisdom, tribal identity, and consciousness that have evolved over many years through the environments around them. Without including indigenous languages in common educational systems, the children from tribes would experience difficulties obtaining any information or keeping their heritage alive.

As for representatives of tribes, studying in schools without native languages leads to this problem, since educational programs of those schools are usually of little relevance concerning the life experience of children, which results in a lack of interest, low efficiency, and the possibility of giving up (Hasena & Mohammed, 2014). In addition, in some cases, the absence of institutional support for preserving tribes' indigenous languages may result in the loss of valuable information about natural phenomena, historical facts, and the tribes' traditions (Prema, 2013). Therefore, it is clear that language can be viewed both as a part of education and as an essential component of identity.

What is important to understand here is that the significance of this paper lies in its fresh interpretation of conventional wisdom, in which language is not a hindrance but a tool for becoming familiar with a wide range of natural phenomena, healing diseases, studying the habits of animals, and performing other beneficial tasks. With such knowledge, one has a chance of succeeding in his/her studies due to the high level of comprehension of reality.

One option to address educational gaps associated with cultural diversity is the NEP 2020. The concept under discussion relies on home language instruction and focuses on using multiple languages in the classroom, along with practical training techniques. Due to the inclusion of Indian Knowledge Systems in the policy, the curriculum may become more familiar to learners, as tribal knowledge can be used throughout lessons. Still, the research shows policy goals are not enough by themselves. Achieving these objectives requires teacher proficiency, learning materials in their own language, curriculum development, the creation of a suitable learning environment, and parental and village council participation in the project (Patra et al., 2025). Failure to have any of the above will imply that the fulfilment of all pledges will be irrelevant when it comes to educational achievements.

One of the most important lessons from this analysis is that the tribe's education system should be separated from the definition of academic success. Methods of knowing through stories, oral histories, rituals, and place-based ecological knowledge need no longer be viewed as supplementary, but as an integral aspect of education. They are present – deeply rooted in culture – and therefore deserve recognition within formal education. Lastly, recognizing that these tribal languages are indeed living languages that carry information makes it possible to

design an education system that is truly relevant and diverse. The importance of such an endeavour goes beyond improved educational performance for tribal communities and extends to the preservation of their age-old culture, which predates modern-day civilization. In other words, promoting the use of native languages is primarily about re-establishing a balance rather than educating students.

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