Research Article

Educational Administration Theory and Practice

Education As Intervention And Tribal Identity In India

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
In the context of globalization and progress, it is more important than ever to safeguard the cultural traditions and identities of tribal peoples. Indigenous communities face a serious threat to their distinctive identity and way of life. Education is one of the interventions that have the potential to help mitigate this loss and support the revitalization of tribal. However, the effectiveness of education in this context remains a topic of ongoing debate. This article examines the role of education in preserving tribal identity in India and examines the challenges and opportunities that come with situating education as an intervention in the context of dwindling tribal identity. It also discusses various educational policies and initiatives intervention for tribal and their education. It highlights the need for a culturally responsive approach to education that takes into account the unique needs and perspectives of tribal communities. The article argues that education can play a crucial role in supporting the revitalization of tribal communities and preserving their cultural heritage, but only if it is implemented in a way that respects and supports tribal identity.

Introduction

India is home to about 700 tribes representing around 8% of India's total population. Tribal in India have long been noted for their rich cultural heritage, traditional knowledge systems, and unique languages. Several tribes have their own traditional systems of governance, social organization, and economic activities. These communities have a distinct identity that distinguishes them apart from the general population and gives them a sense of pride and belonging (Franca, 2021). Their identity in India is shaped by shared cultural heritage, practices, history, traditions, and beliefs which unify them within a particular indigenous community. The notion of what constitutes tribal identity is complex and varied, with a variety of factors playing a role in shaping and defining these societies. These determinants include geographical location, language, and linguistic diversity, religious practices and beliefs, economic and livelihood activities, and cultural norms and traditions (Singh & Kaur, 2008). In the context of globalization and progress, it is more important than ever to safeguard the cultural traditions and identities of tribal peoples. Indian indigenous groups face a serious threat to their distinctive identity and way of life. Education is one of the interventions that have the potential to help mitigate this loss and support the revitalization of tribal communities. However, the effectiveness of education in this context remains a topic of ongoing debate. This article discusses various educational policies, initiatives intervention for tribal lives and their education. Further, it examines the role of education in preserving tribal identity in India and examines the challenges and opportunities that come with situating education as an intervention in the context of dwindling tribal identity.

Policy Perspectives

The Indian and state governments have taken several structural and procedural steps, policy interventions, and initiatives to establish an inclusive environment and provide facilities and opportunities to tribal people for

educational, economic, social, and political inclusion and development. One such intervention is Tribal Sub-plan Strategy aims to enhance the educational and economic performance of tribally dominant communities by offering financial resources and support, while also improving their quality of life through adequate education and health services, as well as physical and financial protection from all forms of exploitation and persecution. It has suggested a few initiatives, including executive actions, the marketing of tribal agriculture products, debt forgiveness through the legislature, and other measures, to stop exploitation and ensure inclusion. The Tribal Panchsheel safeguards the rights to their forests and does not interfere with the tribal people's administration or practices, allowing them to express their creativity without imposing outside values. In addition, it suggested that tribal members be trained in administrative and development tasks and that development outcomes be assessed based on the evolution of human character rather than by statistics. The National Tribal Policy (2006) vowed to take an integrated, comprehensive approach to the concerns of tribal development and protection. It recognizes that the majority of tribal people are still poor, malnourished, has low literacy rates, and face the possibility of being displaced. It thus tries to offer specialized solutions to each of these problems through a long-term strategy integrating the Tribes into mainstream society, assuring all-around development without affecting their unique culture. In the year 1960, the Dhebar Commission emphasized the educational component of the development of tribal groups and proposed the use of tribal languages and cultural resources in the classroom, such as folklore, songs, and historical accounts. It suggested appointing teachers from the tribal community, opening teacher-training facilities in tribal areas, and providing mid-day meals, clothing, free books, reading and writing tools, etc. to all tribal children living in underdeveloped areas. Taking into account geographical considerations, the commission also recommended that schools be opened in tribal communities with at least 30 school-aged children and that school timetables, breaks, and holidays be adjusted to take into account tribal social and cultural life. The Kothari Commission also emphasized the importance of education for tribal people in India and gave special attention to it. In light of this, the Commission welcomed the Dhebar Commission's recommendations with a note of urgency, stating that "intense efforts" must be made to give five years of early education to all tribal children by 1975–1976. The Commission also recommended the necessity of simultaneously educating parents to increase tribal literacy rates. The National Policy on Education 1986 covered all facets of tribal education, from primary to higher education. It endorsed the opening of Anganwadis, primary schools, and Adult Education Centres in tribal areas with a focus on boosting enrollment and retention rates for tribal children in school by a whopping 100% by the year 1990 for the age group of 6 to 11 years old. Creating residential schools and Ashrams, offering incentives, scholarships, and remedial classes to the tribal with a focus on technical, professional, and para-professional courses in higher education were also recommended by NPE 1986. The Right to Education Act 2009's promulgation is the key development in this area. This is one of the historic Acts that guarantees free and compulsory education for children in India between the ages of 6 and 14. The Act establishes basic standards for primary schools and declares education a fundamental right of all children between the ages of 6 and 14. It requires all private schools to reserve 25% of seats for children of weaker sections. The most recent development i.e. National Education Policy 2020 also recommends promoting inclusive education for tribal communities in India. The policy emphasizes the necessity of culturally responsive education, bilingual education, the incorporation of tribal knowledge, community participation, bridge courses and remedial education, scholarships and incentives, as well as teacher education and assistance. These suggestions are meant to address the special requirements and difficulties that tribal communities confront in obtaining high-quality education and to encourage their inclusion and involvement in the educational system (NEP, 2020). Non-governmental organizations and civil societies are also making a substantial contribution to tackling the barriers that tribal people confront in getting access to high-quality education (Naik et al., 2021) These organizations are attempting to raise awareness among tribal communities about the significance of education and are providing support to tribal students to enhance their academic performance.

Dwindling Tribal Identity

The Indian government has been working to protect and promote tribal culture and identity. The Indian Constitution recognizes the privileges and rights of tribal communities and makes provisions for preserving their traditional way of life. In addition, the government has implemented several programs targeted at raising the socio-economic condition of indigenous groups and promoting their cultural heritage. However, there is a debate in this regard as the tribal communities that have been integrated into mainstream society have experienced a loss of their cultural identity as a direct result of the pressures placed upon them to follow the cultural practices and values of the civilization that is considered to be dominant. This has led to the extinction of indigenous languages, the modification of traditional rituals and beliefs, and the degeneration of their cultural heritage (Noronha, 2021). The identity dilemma that is plaguing India's many tribal groups may be traced back to the time when the British were colonizing the country. The British government's policies and administrative methods tried to integrate indigenous people into mainstream society while exploiting indigenous communities' natural resources. During colonial times, tribal identity has been reconstructed by the imposition of traits associated with tribalism, such as primitivism and innocent childlikeness, which have been constructed and degraded. As a result of their constructed identity, they have been exposed to violence

and exploitation (Gupta, 2020; Sumesh and Gogoi, 2021). These policies were carried on into the post-independence period by the Indian government, which actively encouraged the incorporation of indigenous people into mainstream Indian society by implementing initiatives in the areas of land reform and education. They continue to feel excluded from society, despite the welfare measures implemented by the post-independent state, which have not been successful in bridging the gap that exists between them and the rest of society. There has been no discernible shift in the degree to which tribes are social after seven decades of post-colonial experience (Noronha, 2021; Sumesh and Gogoi, 2021). The function and stature of tribal peoples continue to be grossly misunderstood. Tribal people are frequently portrayed either as dangerous insurgents who pose a risk to national security or as backward minorities whose very existence acts as a barrier to the advancement of society (Gupta, 2020). They have been involved in violence stemming from natural resource-related complaints, most notably land alienation, forest policy, and other such issues, and in some areas of the country, tribal are deemed to be fundamentally unsuited to execute their function as citizens and do not concede to the possibility of alternate methods of performing citizenship. In addition, some areas do not acknowledge the potential of an alternative means of performing citizenship (Gupta, 2020). Many studies also demonstrate that the territorial-based identity creation of tribes and their ethnic affiliation is currently being used and supported by political aspirations of the political and economic elite for competition and conflict for political power, economic benefits, and social status. This was shown to be the case in both contemporary and historical contexts (Arora and Kipgen, 2012; Nayak, 2020). The uprooting of many tribal communities as a result of development projects in India, such as dams, mines, and wildlife sanctuaries, is one of the most significant difficulties that the indigenous peoples of India are forced to contend with. The displacement of these groups has had a significant influence on both their way of life and their sense of cultural identity. As a result, many indigenous communities have been compelled to assimilate into mainstream society since they no longer have access to the traditional means of subsistence that they always relied on. The spiritual and cultural link of the tribal to their land has been severely disrupted as a result of the loss of their ancestral lands, which has in turn had a tremendous impact on the communities. The displacement of indigenous communities is not only a matter of geography; it is also an issue of culture. The disappearance of their traditional lands of origin frequently results in the extinction of their cultural practices, customs, and languages (Aden, 2020; Deb, 2023)). There is no tribal autonomy, tribal people are fighting for their territory, and tribal women are being trafficked for work in domestic service, bonded service, prostitution, and forced marriage, among other things (Gupta, 2020). As people assimilate into mainstream culture, it frequently results in the loss of their distinct identity and the adoption of the cultural norms of the dominant society. This process of cultural homogeneity poses a huge risk to the preservation of tribal culture, and as a result, tribal peoples run the risk of losing their traditional clothing and language identities and eventually moving towards extinction (Noronha, 2021; Varekan & Ellen, 2021). Poor political representation and engagement in decision-making processes are also contributing factors that make the tribal identity crisis even worse. The Indian constitution acknowledges the rights of indigenous communities and includes provisions for reservations in both public service employment and educational institutions. Yet, in reality, these regulations are frequently not enforced effectively, which results in a lack of representation of indigenous people in decision-making entities. This results in these communities not having a voice or representation in mainstream society, which also makes it difficult for mainstream society to comprehend the needs and objectives of these communities. In addition to political marginalization, tribal in India endure economic marginalization as a result of their location in rural areas with limited access to necessities such as healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. This lack of access to economic prospects has led to poverty and a loss of traditional livelihoods, further worsening the loss of cultural identity. This lack of access to education and healthcare has a profound impact on the cultural transmission of tribal customs and values from one generation to the next. The younger generation is sometimes unable to acquire their cultural customs and traditions, resulting in a gradual deterioration of cultural knowledge and identity. The tribal identity issue in India has major ramifications for the development of these groups. The loss of cultural identity and marginalization from economic prospects result in a lack of desire and aspiration among the youth, resulting in a lack of human capital and a lack of economic development. This maintains a cycle of poverty and marginalization and inhibits efforts to address the tribal identity dilemma.

Education as Intervention

The sociocultural, political, economic, and educational aspects of tribal life have all been significantly impacted by various policies and activities. These policies and programs attempt to improve the quality of life of tribal and provide opportunities to conserve their cultural identity. After a long tradition of educational interventions in India, it has become one of the dominating factors that influence the practices and beliefs of tribal people in a variety of different ways. Studies have shown that education can significantly affect Indian tribal identity. The educational system has both beneficial and detrimental effects on the continuation of cultural practices and customs that are exclusive to tribal communities. Education can play a role in the perpetuation of tribal cultural

traditions by serving as a medium for the transmission of tribal knowledge and customs from one generation to the next. On the other hand, education has the potential to degrade tribal identity since it introduces people to new ideas and ways of life that may or may not be compatible with the cultural norms that are associated with their communities (Varekan & Ellen, 2021). In addition to this, it also assists in the development of a sense of pride in tribal identity by facilitating access to information regarding tribal history and culture and drawing attention to the contributions that tribal communities have made to Indian society. Students from tribal communities become susceptible to developing new perspectives and worldviews as a result of their educational experiences, which may result in a change in their sense of cultural identity. As a result of students from tribal communities being exposed to cultures from other parts of the world in the course of their education, there is a merging of cultural identities. Tribal communities become empowered by education because it equips people with the knowledge and abilities needed to take part in political activism and fight for their rights and interests. Education has helped people in tribal communities move up in society by giving them chances to get jobs and move up in areas like government, business, and the arts. Education opens up more economic prospects for tribe members, which in turn helps to enhance their standard of living and supports the preservation of their cultural customs and practices (Bull et al., 2020). Students from tribal communities can have a broader understanding of the world and changes in their views and values as a result of being exposed to new concepts and points of view through the process of education. This can also affect their sense of tribal identity, since it may cause them to embrace new ways of thinking and behaving that are distinct from the cultural practices that are traditionally associated with their tribe. Students from tribal communities have the potential to improve their leadership potential which may result in increased representation and influence for tribal people in political and economic decision-making processes. Education has the potential to foster analytical and critical thinking, which, in turn, can assist in the process of challenging and transforming traditional ideas and behaviours that may be damaging to tribal people.

Education has many good effects on tribal society, but it also has the potential to have negative effects on tribal identity if it is not culturally sensitive and does not reflect the values and beliefs of the tribal community (Gedam, 2021). One of the most significant ways in which education can affect tribal identity is through the process of cultural assimilation. This process takes place when education supports cultural assimilation, which is the process by which tribal communities embrace the cultural values, practices, and beliefs of another culture. Assimilation into mainstream culture results in the loss of traditional cultural practices and beliefs, as well as the individuality and distinctiveness that are essential components of tribal identity (Sonowal, 2008; Noronha, 2021; Varekan & Ellen, 2021). The introduction of modern schooling into traditional communities frequently poses a threat to the distinct linguistic traditions of indigenous peoples. This results in the loss of significant cultural and historical knowledge, which is frequently embedded in language. Moreover, this results in a fall in the use of traditional languages and the erosion of tribal identity (Mishra, 2006; Sinha, 2020). The process of urbanization and migration is another way in which education can have an impact on the identity of a tribal group. Because of the lack of educational and employment prospects in rural areas, many people who are members of tribal communities are moving to metropolitan areas, which can lead to a disconnection from their cultural heritage and the customs they grew up with (Kumari, 2016). As a result, there is a risk of a weakening of tribal identity, as individuals become more immersed in the dominant culture and distance themselves from the traditional cultural practices and beliefs of their own tribe. There are numerous indigenous tribes in India, each with its own set of customs, rituals, and beliefs that are intertwined with the natural environment. Some of these activities include the worship of nature and the use of natural resources for therapeutic purposes. Yet, contemporary schooling frequently ignores these cultural practices and beliefs, which encourages individuals to adopt Western concepts and values that frequently clash with the traditional cultural practices of those persons (Mishra, 2006). This can lead to a decline in the use of traditional cultural rituals and beliefs, as well as a loss of pride in one's tribal origin. The loss of traditional cultural practices and beliefs can have far-reaching effects on tribal groups, affecting their way of life as well as their sense of community. This loss harms both of these aspects of tribal life. The weakening of a tribe's sense of identity can result in a loss of pride in one's cultural history as well as a separation from the traditional ideas and customs of that heritage. This can result in a lack of cultural cohesion, which makes it difficult for individuals to identify with their community and makes it difficult for communities to preserve their cultural heritage and traditions. The survival of their cultural heritage and customs is currently one of the most significant obstacles that face India's tribal groups in the modern day. The education system in India has often failed to recognize the distinctive cultural and linguistic history of India's tribal tribes. This has resulted in a neglect of traditional forms of knowledge and a lack of awareness about the value of these communities (Sinha, 2020). As a result, individuals hailing from these communities have had a more difficult time preserving their cultural legacy, and as a result, groups have had a more difficult time passing on traditional knowledge from one generation to the next. Overall, education has played a significant part in the construction of tribal identities in India by offering access to information, possibilities for the preservation of cultural traditions, and pathways for the advancement of social and economic status. Yet, it is essential to point out that access to education has not been provided on an equitable basis to all tribal groups, and there is still a requirement for initiatives to overcome educational gaps in tribal areas.

Conclusion

The prevailing identity crisis among India's diverse tribal communities presents a significant challenge to the nation's endeavours to uphold its affluent cultural heritage and tradition. This predicament is being exacerbated by various factors, including the displacement of indigenous populations, limited access to healthcare, poor political representation, poverty and a loss of traditional livelihoods, and the process of cultural assimilation. The introduction of present forms of schooling in India has resulted in the loss of ancient cultural practices and beliefs, as well as in the cultural assimilation and degradation of tribal identity. Hence, it is imperative that the Indian government expeditiously and resolutely addresses these concerns and ensures the protection of the rights of the various tribes. The Indian government and other civil society groups need to adopt a more proactive and inclusive approach to combat the tribal identity crisis. This can be achieved through supporting the preservation of cultural identity, facilitating access to economic opportunities, and promoting political representation and the engagement of tribal people in decision-making processes. The education system must exhibit cultural sensitivity and provide a more inclusive curriculum and pedagogy that is reflective of their cultural history and the customs that have been passed down through generations. This can help to conserve and strengthen tribal identity for future generations, as well as develop a broader knowledge of tribal identity in general by fostering cultural preservation while opening up doors for social and economic mobility, and exposure to new perspectives.

Funding

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