

Modernity And Education: A Contextual Appraisal With Emphasis On Assam's Tea Tribes

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ABSTRACT

The research probes into the core of modernity and education within the context of tea tribes of Assam, traditionally marginalized communities stemming their origins to the British indentured labourers in tea plantations. It assesses how education foment for socioeconomic advancement and cultural perpetuation among tea tribes, while addressing challenges such as socioeconomic inequalities, cultural hindrances and inadequate infrastructure. The study reinforces education's dualistic role in fostering social mobility and molding identity among the tea tribe youth amid the transformation in the social and economic landscape. Through qualitative and quantitative analysis of primary data supplemented the secondary sources a nuanced understanding of the educational experiences of the tea tribe is carried forth.

Keywords: marginalized, education, challenges, socioeconomic

Introduction

As modern individuals we characterize "education as reading and writing". With the help of modern education a person can enhance his or her knowledge and expand his horizon additionally take advantage of the benefits of modernization (Sen, 2007). Education is deemed as the most crucial "instrument of modernity" (Baniwal & Sharma, 2021). The congregation of "modernity" and "tradition" in tribal culture has been very much evident from the British colonial period. They have been traversing through perpetual changes like "colonization", "decolonization", "sanskritization", and "detrribalization". Modernization has both positive and negative impacts on education. The introduction of cutting edge technology on one hand has led to radical changes in the education sector with integration of computers and e learning, smart classrooms and enabling access to online resources. Moreover the internet has crucial role in connection with the global education quite swiftly changing the entire dynamics of education. In addition to it has also spurred the enrollment of students in classrooms, bolstered gender equality and also enhanced the no. of female teachers in the educational system. However there are some adverse effect of modernization, like the improper utilization of social media affecting the family processes to which there needs to be a careful response and thoughtful approach to optimize the benefits of modernization. When we speak about "modernization" it usually means a alteration in the "way of life", "better lifestyle", "communication", "urbanization", "change in residence", occupation etc (Jha, 2016). Research on the modernization has been stumbled on due to the lack of a universally accepted definition and a consensus for appropriate scope of analysis. While much on the literature on modernization in the initial period were on national, social and communal levels but there was a substantial increase in studies reviewing attitude and behavior or individual modernization from the period of 1960's with an enhanced focus on the pertinence of "modern man". At the national level modernization is termed as a shift towards adoption of more inanimate objects and technologies for exercising of power implying a process of change over the time. Many scholars and historians have observed modernization as process of change over time; many see it as a societal transformation driven by technological advancements affecting various aspects such as politics, economics, demography and characteristics of the population.

Traditionally education is recognized for its significant role in imparting not only just formal education but also a hidden curriculum that has an influence on student's development. Sociologist and psychologists have emphasized on comprehending the hidden curriculum and its impact on the societal roles. Studies have revealed that schooling contribute to unequal distribution of adult status and reinforce social roles. Ozga highlights that the Scotland's way towards modernization deviates from the managerial models observed in other contexts like England, by emphasizing on a cooperative, professional partnership that fosters on

democratization and public consultation. This unique approach led's to disparate consequences and narratives in the education system, highlighting how cultural contexts can substantially influence the implementation and impact of modernization directives (Thomas, 2005). Additionally scholars such as Dreeban have contended that schooling fosters attribute such as independence, achievement and universalism which are indicators of modernity (Holsinger, 1987). Moreover formative empirical research by Lerner in middle east countries emphasized on the significance of environmental factors and psychological inclination in sculpting modern individual accentuating the role of empathy, achievement motivation as a driver of economic growth and progress which eventually results in the societal progress. The study of Kahl in Mexico and Brazil presented scientific evidence on the interconnection between formal education and individual modernity revealing common patterns within the countries. Inkeles and Smith in their studies across six countries particularly emphasized on the role of institutions like schools and factories in shaping the values and attitudes of people (Thomas, 2005). Further in their study they found a strong positive correlation between education and level of modernity scores which those people having high education persistently score higher in modernity scales across countries. It remained pertinent even after controlling other factors such as exposure to mass media and factory experience. Many studies have also highlighted about the school infrastructure or the structure of the school contributes to the effectiveness in promoting modern values.

Education involves guiding a person's "behaviour" and plays a significant role in enhancing a individual's "personal endowments" overcoming limitations and expanding opportunities leading to improved wellbeing. The remote location of the villages hinders the accessibility to better education especially when they have to travel to neighbouring towns to gain education. Moreover the language is a significant constraint preventing them from accessing education. Moreover the parents of the children failed to hold any long term vision, reason behind many of them are themselves illiterate due o which they send their children to employment ventures for immediate benefit to their family income (Punnaiah, 2018). The educational divide brought by Macaulay still persists today. Modernization through education in India has largely been confined to an educated elite section rather than becoming a mass phenomenon. The impact of modernization on education can be assessed in three aspects: the "cultural content" of the education, its organizational structure and its rate of expansion. Some of the key milestone in the India's history includes Macaulay's 1835 policy promoting European learning through English, Sir Charles Wood 1854 dispatch recognizing the need for mass education and abandoning selective education and the 1883 Indian Education Commission advocating for private Indian involvement in education expansion. Over the time, India developed a general educational structure comprises three main categories: primary vernacular education(excluding English missionary school), high school and secondary education and college and university education (Vara Prasad, 2016). The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education aged 6-14 years of age states that education is a fundamental entitlement for children. The tea garden areas have fewer opportunities for education especially at the secondary level and higher education. Most of the schools do not have a proper ratio between teacher and student according to the RTE act. Moreover lack of proper accommodation for teachers and students is also another hindrance in accessing education (Malyadri, 2012).

The Tea garden cell in Assam which was established in 2003 has been actively involved in numerous educational initiatives for the elementary education. The efforts comprehensively include the Meena Campaign, enrollment initiatives and summer camps focused at promoting education among tea garden girls. The SSA which was established in 2004 in Assam identified 825 registered tea gardens as special focused areas due to their educational backwardness and allocated funds for the maintenance of infrastructure of these schools. A research carried out by Ministry of Labour and Employment's Labour Bureau in New Delhi in 1980 reveal the depressed state of education in the tea garden areas, inspite of the introduction of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 (Baruah & Daimari, 2018). Thus the current study emphasizes on the educational condition of the tea tribes and assessing the level of modernization over the different aspects of education be it infrastructure, urbanization, educational attainment, economic growth etc.

Objectives

- 1) To assess the educational condition of tea tribes of some selected tea estates of Assam.
- 2) To assess the modernization levels of the garden household of Assam
- 3) To examine the intercorrelation between the indicators of modernization and the overall modernization index

Methodology:

The research deploys a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire module as the primary data collection technique. The questionnaire encompasses items including educational access, educational infrastructure, and quality of educational resources, mass media, and political participation. The indicators related to education and modernization is taken keeping in mind the Inkeles and Smith scale of individual modernity. A sample size of 480 tea garden including the adjacent *basti* area household is undertaken for study. Random sampling is conducted and questions related to education and modernization is put forth.

Data is analyzed utilizing statistical method to identify the trends, correlations and the patterns. Throughout the survey ethical considerations such as consent of the respondents, confidentiality and sensitivity is kept into consideration. Apart from the primary data, the study also employs secondary data from sources such as journal article, literature, book reviews to provide a nuanced understanding of the interplay between education, modernity and the tea tribe community of Assam. The study is articulated to obtain insights from the tea tribe community, educators and policy makers in Assam chosen through deliberate sampling to foster diverse perspectives.

Results and discussion:

The question of modernity is linked with recognition of “individuality”, independence in the “choice of education” and the importance of “rationality” in a collective life. An attempt to define the term “modernity” validates the importance of “education” and “universal literacy”. Education is alleged to interweave with modernity by the way of its role in widening the horizons of awareness by giving primacy to the individuals and imparting skills that enable the individuals to exercise their choice in the work market. It is not as if education creates modernity; rather, it embodies modernity in as much as its own encounter with modernity has transformed it so vitally (Kumar, 2014).

In classifying modernization indicators in accordance with Inkeles scale, several facets of development across economic, educational, urbanization, mass communication, political participation, attitude, values and general modernization are considered. Amidst economic growth and development, indicators like availability of computer facilities (A1) and drinking water facilities in schools (A2) showcases advancement in infrastructure and resources. Educational attainment is assayed through factors like the proximity of schools to homes (B1), the presence of high schools within the tea gardens (B2) and initiatives such as education of adults and scholarships (B3, B4). Urbanization indicators such as transportation to schools (C1) and the accessibility of play facilities (C2), ascertain the incorporation of educational institutions into urban settings. Mass communication is measured by the utilization of online tools (D1), indicating the adoption of digital aids for learning.

Political participation is assayed through community collaboration such as parental consciousness of sending children to school (E1) and the engagement of NGOs in educational context, pinpointing societal involvement in educational initiatives. Attitudes and values are exemplified in interactions between teachers and students (F1), allocation of educational materials (F2), regular examination practices (F3) and facilities like special toilets for girls (F4) reflecting inclusivity and support systems within schools. General modernization engulfs broader aspects like school infrastructure (G1), classroom amenities such as lighting (G2) and educational trips (G3), depicting the overall development and enrichment opportunities within educational institutions. These criteria collectively provide a inclusive framework for assessing the variegated aspects of modernization in educational settings, engulfing both physical infrastructure and socioeconomic development that facilitate social enhancement and educational quality. A modernization index has been constructed by classifying the items of the different scales used for measuring into two point likert scale, i.e by assigning value 0 as traditional and 1 as modern. Through this an overall modernization score has been calculated and those tea garden households having values lesser than 5, between 5-10 and greater than 10 are termed as low, medium and higher categories of modernization respectively. About 79.6 percent of the tea garden household fall into “Medium category” highlighting that majority of the observations has a moderate level of modernization. A negligible percentage of the tea garden households are in the “Low” and “High” categories

Table 1 Correlation between modernization index and economic growth

Correlations		Mod_index	Economicgrowth_dev
Mod_index	Pearson Correlation	1	.645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	480	480
Economic growth_dev(A)	Pearson Correlation	.645**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	480	480

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This strong and significant correlation (0.645) underscores the importance of modernization in fostering economic growth and development. It implies that as tea garden communities experience advancements in various aspects captured by the Modernization Index (such as infrastructure, education, and societal attitudes), there is a corresponding positive impact on economic outcomes. This correlation also highlights the interdependence between socio-economic development and broader modernization processes, emphasizing the need for integrated policies that address multiple facets of development

Table 2 Correlation between modernization index and educational attainment

Correlations			
		Mod_index	Educational_attaint(B)
Mod_index	Pearson Correlation	1	.481**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	480	480
Educational_attaint(B)	Pearson Correlation	.481**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	480	480
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The significant association (0.481) between the Modernization Index and Educational Attainment accentuates the importance of modernization processes in endorsing educational development amidst tea garden households. As communities experience advancements captured by the modernization Index, such as better school infrastructure, increased access to educational resources, and supportive social environments, educational attainment tends to improve. Moreover building on factors that facilitate modernization is likely to result in higher educational outcomes and overall socio-economic progress in tea garden communities.

Table 3 Correlation between modernization index and urbanization.

Correlations			
		Mod_index	Urbanization(C)
Mod_index	Pearson Correlation	1	.272**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	480	480
Urbanization(C)	Pearson Correlation	.272**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	480	480
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.272 signifies a weak positive linear association betwixt the Modernization Index and Urbanization within the 480 sampled tea garden household. This means with the increase in the modernization index, there seems to be a slight increase in Urbanization, and vice versa. The positive sign (+0.272) showcases that higher values of the Modernization Index are associated with higher levels of urbanization. This proposes that as tea garden communities encounters improvements in modernization factors (such as infrastructure, technology adoption, and socio-economic development), there is a propensity for urbanization processes to also progress, despite the relationship is not as strong as with economic growth and educational attainment.

Table 4 Correlation between mass communication and modernization index

Correlations			
		Modernization_index	Mass_Communication(D)
Modernization_index	Pearson Correlation	1	.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	480	480
Mass_Communication(D)	Pearson Correlation	.350**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	480	480
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The correlation between modernization index and access to mass communication suggests a positive correlation(0.350) which implies that access to mass communication plays a signification role in the development of the tea tribes.

Table 5: Correlation between political participation and modernization index

Correlations			
		Political_participation(E)	Modernization_index
Political_participation(E)	Pearson Correlation	1	.424**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000

	N	480	480
Modernization_index	Pearson Correlation	.424**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	480	480

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The indicators constituting political participation is significantly correlated to modernization index (0.424) at 0.01 level of significance. Increased political participation among these communities plays a significant role in promoting modernization and enhancing the overall condition of the tea tribes.

Table 6: Correlation between modernization index and attitudes and values.

Correlations			
		Mod_index	Attitudes_values(F)
Mod_index	Pearson Correlation	1	.550**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	480	480
Attitudes_values(F)	Pearson Correlation	.550**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	480	480

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The positive sign (+0.550) indicates that higher levels of modernization are associated with more progressive attitudes and values. This implies that modernization processes within tea garden communities, such as improvements in infrastructure, education, and socio-economic conditions, are linked to shifts in societal attitudes and values towards more progressive and modern viewpoints.

Table 7 Correlation between modernization index and general modernization.

Correlations			
		Mod_index	General_Modernization(G)
Mod_index	Pearson Correlation	1	.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	480	480
General_Modernization(G)	Pearson Correlation	.507**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	480	480

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The positive correlation coefficient (+0.507) signifies that higher levels of the Modernization Index are associated with higher levels of general modernization. This implies that various aspects of modernization, such as improvements in infrastructure, technology, education, and socio-economic conditions, tend to progress together in the tea garden communities.

Conclusion

The study delves into the interdependence between modernity and education within the context of Assam's tea tribes, emphasizing on the important role education undertakes in fostering socio economic advancement and cultural continuation among these historically suppressed communities. By analyzing various indicators of modernization-economic growth, educational attainment, urbanization, mass communication, political participation, attitudes and values-the research furnishes a holistic insights of how modernization processes influences and are swayed by educational developments in tea garden household. The strong and prominent correlation (0.645) between modernization index and economic growth spotlights the crucial role of modernization in fostering economic development. The substantial correlation (0.481) between modernization index and educational attainment highlights education's function as an impetus for modernization. Enhanced school infrastructure, better access to educational resources contributing to enhanced educational outcomes. While the association between modernization and urbanization (0.272) is weaker but it is positive and significant. The intermediate positive correlation (0.550) between modernization index and attitudes and values alludes that modernization processes are linked with transition towards more progressive and modern viewpoints within tea garden communities. This showcases the broader cultural and societal changes alongside with economic and cultural advancements. The correlation between modernization index and general modernization (0.507) pinpoints various aspects of modernization such as enhancement in infrastructure, technology, education and socioeconomic conditions move together in conjunction. The study ultimately highlights the groundbreaking potential of education in modernization process within the tea garden

contextual framework. By stimulating socioeconomic development and trailblazing societal improvements, education serves as bedrock for forming a modern, equitable and prosperous society.

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