

Multilingual Education (MLE) for Tribal Children of Odisha

Background

Though Odia is the official language, there are 22 officially recognized tribal languages in Odisha. The overall literacy rate of Odisha has increased from 49 per cent in 1991 to 73 per cent in 2011. The literacy rate among tribal population has also demonstrated the increasing trend over the years, yet the gap between tribal literacy and that of entire population continues to be significantly high.

Due to the interventions of DPEP and SSA and several other efforts of the State, the enrolment of tribal children in primary & upper-primary schools has substantially increased, but retaining these children till completion of elementary schooling continues to be a challenge. One of the major reasons identified by the experts for low retention and educational outcomes among tribal children is the language barrier in the classrooms.

In Odisha, children are taught in Odia which is challenging for many of the tribal children whose mother tongue is not Odia. The context of textbooks is also unfamiliar to tribal children, leaving them unable to fully comprehend classroom teaching and activities. This has an effect on retention and learning outcomes. Further, there is inadequate training, pedagogy and material support for teachers to deal with diverse classroom environments. Teachers lack the capacity to effectively deal with multilingual and multicultural classrooms.



First-language-first education

Primary education in a child's first language or mother tongue is crucial to early learning and considered as most effective strategy for developing strong academic foundations and a base for acquiring proficiency in other languages. In Mother Tongue based **Multilingual Education (MLE) programme**, the schooling begins in mother tongue and transits to additional languages gradually. The use of mother tongue as medium of imparting education in early grades enable children to develop a strong education foundation through beginning in the language the learners know best, building on the knowledge and experience they bring to the classroom, and enhance confidence and self-esteem

Right to Education 2009

Recognizing the important role played by the language used in classrooms in influencing the quality and equity issues, the RCFCE Act, 2009 has rightly emphasized the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction as far as practicable under Section 29 (2).

Broad Objectives of MLE

- To Ensure equity and quality education to tribal children
- To improve tribal students' reading, writing skills and learning through use of mother tongue in early grades
- To introduce state and national language at early stages to mainstream the tribal children in state-wide education system
- To develop respect among tribal children for their language and culture



Launching Multilingual Education in Odisha

For addressing the language issue faced by the tribal students, way back in 1997-98, ATDC undertook a Linguistic Survey and Mapping in 4 DPEP districts i.e. Rayagada, Gajapati, Kalahandi and Keonjhar. Upon mapping, 4 languages i.e. Saura, Kui, Kuvi&Juang were identified while 2 other languages Koya&Bonda were also selected for initiating interventions to support transaction of school curriculum in these languages. Subsequently primers were developed in these 6 languages for grade I and were printed by DPEP for use in schools with students from these language groups. The primers in these 6 languages were in use till 2005.



As per the decision of the government; in July, 2006 (29/7/2006) the State Tribal Advisory Committee headed by the Chief Minister, Odisha advised the Department of School and Mass Education to take necessary steps for adopting tribal languages as the medium of instruction at primary level under the MLE programme. In the first phase 10 languages were selected for adoption as medium of instruction at Primary level under the MLE programme in the State as an innovative programme under SSA. The languages are Santali, Saura, Koya, Kui, Kuvi, Kishan, Oram, Munda, Juanga and Bonda. Further, MLE programme has been extended to 11 more tribal languages such as Gadaba, Ho, Gondi, Paroja, Kharia, Didayi, Bhinjhal, Bhuiyan, Bhumia, Bhatra and Bhunjia (2013-14).

Development of MLE Programme

A core group “MLE State Resource Group” was formed consisting of eminent linguistics, educationists, tribal experts and tribal language resource persons to provide support for the development & strengthening of the MLE programme in the state.

- The Mother-tongue based MLE programme was designed to cover the primary education of the children from class I to class V.
- The language transition plan under the MLE Programme was developed to initiate the learning in child’s mother tongue first and gradually introduce the second language (L2) Oriya and third language (L3) English in a planned manner basing on the following scheme:

	Class-I	Class-II	Class-III	Class-IV	Class-V
MT language learning	Language in MT – Oral & Written (alphabets)	Language in MT – Developing proficiency – Oral & written	Language in MT	MT as subject	MT as subject
Mathematics	Math in MT	Math in MT	Math in MT	Math in L2 (Odia)	Math L2 (Odia)
EVS	Environmental studies in MT	Environmental studies in MT	Environmental studies in MT	Environmental studies in MT and Odia	Environmental studies in Odia
Second language learning (Odia)		Oral & Written (alphabets)	Developing proficiency in Reading & writing	Odia as language subject	Odia as language subject
Third language learning (English)			Oral & Written (alphabets)	English as Language subject - Developing proficiency in Reading & writing	English as language subject

- Strategy was devised to facilitate transition from 100% tribal language in class-I to 100% Oriya by class-V over a period of five years.

- Schools with more than 90% students from a particular tribal language have been selected for implementation of MT based MLE
- MLE programme is operational in 1485 schools in 21 tribal languages in 17 tribal dominated districts namely, Angul, Bargarh, Balasore, Dhenkanal, Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Koraput, Keonjhar, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nawarangpur, Nuapada, Rayagada, Sambalpur and Sundargarh.
- 817 schools have been identified (Mayurbhanj, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Keonjhar & Nawarangpur) to be operational.
- Curriculum framework and textbooks for the MLE programme developed based on the NCF 2005 and SCF-2007.
- The transaction materials and text books are in the tribal languages but the script used is Odia. For Santhali language materials, the Ol-Chiki script has been used. These materials have strong integration of cultural context.
- Text books developed for class I to V in 10 tribal languages (phase – I) and Class I to III text books for newly adopted 11 tribal languages (phase – II) have been developed for try out.
- Based on tribal culture and tradition language and area specific Supplementary reading materials have also been developed in 21 tribal languages for Class I & II.
- Work book for Class I and II have been developed in 10 tribal languages (phase I)
- The Pre-Primary Curriculum Material “Nua-Arunima” – a teachers’ handbook has been adapted in 10 tribal languages for facilitating Mother Tongue Based Pre-primary Education
- In order to implement the programme successfully Srujan, a combination of different child-centred activities are being conducted involving the community members who have strong participation in creating a joyful learning atmosphere in the schools and promoting the creative talents of the children.
- From the very beginning the programme was being run by the regular language knowing teachers and community mobilizers where there was no teacher. The community mobilizers have been re-designated as Education Volunteer and later on as Language Instructor.
- Advertisement for recruitment of 3500 Language Teachers (ShikshaSahayaks) was published during 2013-14 out of which 3400 S.S have been engaged to address the issue of tribal language teachers for MLE programme in 20 languages in 15 districts.
- 242 Language Instructors are in position with a monthly remuneration of Rs 3200/- after recruitment of MLE ShikshaSahayaks for effective implementation of MLE programme as they have not been selected as ShikshaSahayaks.
- A proposal has been submitted before Govt. to engage of 995 ShikshaSahayaks for MLE programme.



- An attitudinal training module, class-wise training manuals, 3-day training module for educational administrators, 10-day induction teacher training module, early grade and primary grade teachers training module developed and the existing teachers, newly recruited SSs have been trained.
- A State-level Policy prepared and approved by the Government during 2014-15 for facilitating and accelerating the Mother-Tongue based Multilingual Education for all tribal children vide Notification No.14118 dated 01.07.2014.

Support Mechanism

Tribal Education Coordinator at District –SSA office is responsible for overall management and monitoring of the programme at district level while State Tribal Education intervention is responsible for the overall programme development and monitoring aspects. The District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) in MLE districts provides academic support to the programme through review/ sharing meetings and training of the MLE teachers. District Resource Group involving community members, language experts and other academicians from the language group also extend their support to the programme.

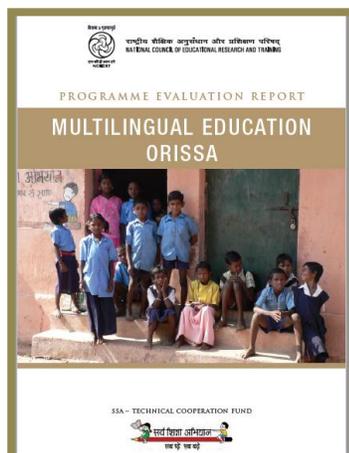
Community Involvement

The Srujan programme was introduced to increase community involvement in schools. Srujan encourages communities to participate in creating a joyful learning atmosphere in schools. The teacher facilitates the participation of children and community members in activities such as story-telling, arts and crafts, music, dance, village projects, science and math melas, traditional games, and forest festivals. The purpose of the programme is to connect community knowledge with the school curriculum. Srujan promotes enrolment and retention and helps to identify and integrate out of school children.



Impact of the MLE programme

There has been an increase in the attendance and retention of tribal students since MLE approach was introduced in schools. The use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in the classroom has also led to children being more engaged in the teaching and learning process.



MLE classrooms are lively and interactive by use of pictures and artefacts from tribal cultures. This familiarity has led to a higher level of belongingness and confidence among the tribal students. Teaching and learning material corners in the schools are enriched by local materials. Local materials have also been used to set up tribal museums. This has enabled children to learn more about their own culture in their own language.

An evaluation study conducted by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) found that the MLE programme has a positive impact on students' achievement in language and mathematics conducted in tribal languages. Significant achievement found in the oral, written and total tests in language and Math by children of MLE schools is better in comparison to that of non-MLE school children