Transition curriculum: a smooth transition of indigenous children from preschool to primary school, an initiative by Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Odisha, India

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The Kalinga Institute of Social Science (KISS), one of the largest free residential schools in Asia for tribal children, has 25,000 students representing all 62 tribal communities of Odisha, India, speaking more than 25 languages which creates diverse forms a multi-ethnic, multicultural, and multilingual situation. While the state's school language is Odia, the fact that the student's language belonging to tribal communities completely differs from the school language is a great challenge for the early learners.

KISS has initiated a mother tongue-based multilingual early childhood education approach in which children start learning in their mother tongue in early grades with a gradual transition to other languages. It helps bridging the gap between home and school languages and validate the child's home culture and traditional knowledge thus enabling better further learning.

Ignoring mother tongue intervention in early childhood for tribal children indirectly hampers the early childhood learning process. Poor availability of tribal-friendly primers, non-availability of multilingual education (MLE)-trained teachers and culture-specific pedagogy drove KISS (with the support of Bernard Van Leer Foundation) to developed a transition curriculum to help a smooth transition from preschool to formal school. During the process, our institute has developed a teacher-training module on transition curriculum and created a group of well-trained master MLE trainers, as well as a language lab to strengthen peer interaction, community interaction, and experience sharing.

Initially, KISS has focussed on five tribal languages: Santali, Kui, Kuvi, Soura, and Munda. However, the training module developed can incorporate all the language communities through MTB early childhood multilingual education for a smooth transition to formal education.