

# Reframing Digital Education for Tribal Inclusion in the Vision of Viksit Bharat

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## Abstract

The vision of Viksit Bharat in India makes digital education one of the most important tools of inclusive development. Yet, even with the increased access to technology, tribal communities experience systematic inequality in education influenced by the program of marginalisation in the past and the cultural mismatch in mainstream education insists. This article argues that access-oriented digital strategies are insufficient and must be reframed. Drawing on Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and UNESCO's inclusive and rights-based education framework, the study conceptualises digital education as a human development intervention rather than a technological solution. It suggests a capacity-based model focusing on language accessibility, cultural sensitivity, community involvement as well as institutional enrichment. The article believes that digital education has the potential to play a significant role in Viksit Bharat by ensuring those freedoms are truly increased and offering tribal children a chance to be included in education on fair conditions.

**Keywords:** Digital Education; Tribal Inclusion; Viksit Bharat; Capability Approach; Inclusive Education

## 1. Introduction

Online learning platforms, education technology and digital classrooms are widely encouraged as tools of inclusion and scalability by becoming a education reforms in India. In the national vision of Viksit Bharat, technology-based education is considered one of the channels to economic development, innovation, and manpower preparation (Government of India, 2020).

However, this story tends to ignore the real-life situations of tribal people. Despite the fact that Scheduled Tribes represent about 8.6% of the population of India, according to the latest Census data, even with recent national education reports, there is still lower educational attainment, increased dropout rates, and unequal access to quality and digitally enabled learning among tribal groups (Government of India, 2020; Government of India, 2022).

According to the article, digital education among tribal populations should be re-strategized as an equity-based, agency-based, and culture consideration human development practice rather than a technological-based intervention.

## **2. Tribal Education and The Need to Reframe Access-Based Digital Models**

Traditionally, the educational policies concerning tribal populations have been aimed at the physical accessibility, expansion of enrolment, and development of infrastructures. Although these initiatives have enhanced attendance levels, the performance of learning is not balanced (Government of India, 2020). The main weakness is the incompatibility between tribal socio-cultural settings and mainstream education systems.

The knowledge systems that belong to tribes are based on oral traditions, collective learning and ecological relationship. Nonetheless, formal education and most online spaces prioritize standardised education, dominant languages and text-based modes of learning. This leads to education being culturally alienating instead of empowering (UNESCO, 2019).

The digital education programs that focus on device distribution and connectivity without these structural concerns are likely to bring about what scholars refer to as digital exclusion in which the marginalised learners are functionally connected and technically present (OECD, 2021).

## **3. Theoretical Foundations**

### **Sen's Capability Approach**

The Capability Approach of development formulated by Amartya Sen describes development as the increase in the real freedoms of people which is their capability to live a life that they have a reason to appreciate (Sen, 1999). In this context, education is not always a contribution to economic productivity, but a fundamental competence enabling agency, agency and social inclusion.

When applied to the digital education, the capability lens changes the focus of the access to outcomes. The question of relevance arises; does digital education give tribal learners the ability to transform technological resources into valuable products like learning agency, means of livelihood, and cultural representation.

## **4. UNESCO'S Inclusive and Rights Based Education Framework**

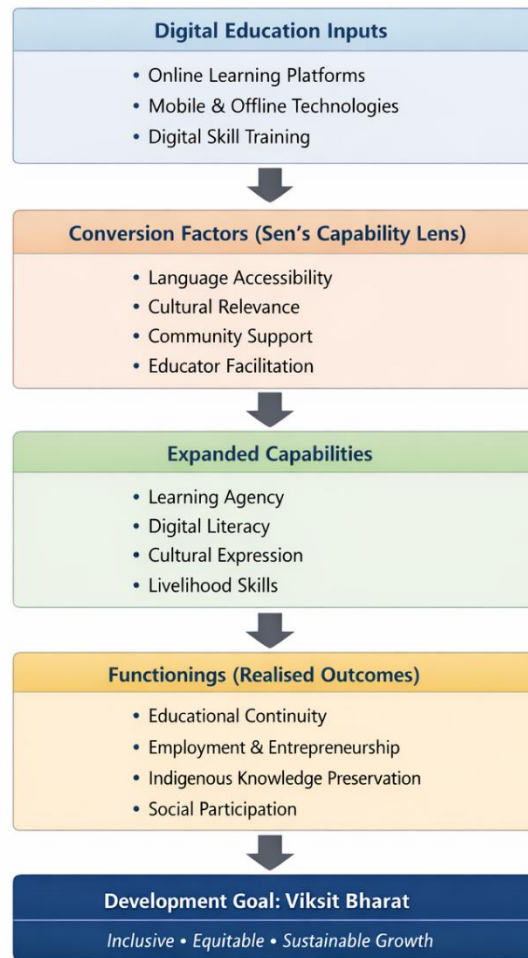
UNESCO defines education as the human right that should be inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive (UNESCO, 2020). Its framework focuses on respect of linguistic diversity, indigenous knowledge systems and learner based pedagogies.

This approach supports the perception of the tribal communities that education must promote the cultural identity, rather than dismantle it. Together with the framework offered by Sen, the perspective on the

problem presented by UNESCO adds to the promotion of the ethical responsibility of ensuring that the digital learning process encourages liberties without eroding the cultural worth.

### A Theory Backed Conceptual Framework for Tribal Digital Education

Figure 1: Capability-Driven Digital Education Framework for Tribal Inclusion



### 5. Framework Explanation

This article suggests a Capability-Based Digital Education Framework of Tribal Inclusion, which creates a conceptualisation of digital education as a facilitating input and not an outcome. It is based on the Capability Approach by Sen and argues that the developmental value of digital technologies is based on the capacity of learners to transform educational material into meaningful capabilities based on supporting social, cultural and institutional environments.

The framework is made up of four components that are interrelated. The **Digital education inputs** comprise the infrastructure, platforms, multilingual resources, and competences of educators. These inputs are converted to real learning opportunities to tribal learners depending on conversion factors like the linguistic accessibility, cultural relevance, community participation and institutional support. Under

condition in which these variables are synchronized, digital education enhances capabilities, which implies learning autonomy, digital literacy, cultural expression, and livelihood-related skills. These abilities allow treasured functioning, including long-term academic involvement, financial hardiness, political involvement, and heritage maintenance.

## 6. Digital Education As A Tool For Tribal Empowerment

Digital education can empower tribal people in various ways when combined with ability and rights-based ideologies. Digital material and audio-visual narratives with multiple languages can help to preserve indigenous languages and oral histories (UNESCO, 2019). Local livelihoods including sustainable agriculture, forest-based businesses, and handicrafts can be improved through digital skills, which can support the economic resilience and lower the forced movement (World Bank, 2020).

In addition, by using tribal youth as digital content creators, not consumers, agency, leadership, and civic engagement are developed, which supports education based on the long-term development goals (OECD, 2021).

## 7. Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Recurrent challenges such as digital divide, low level of digital literacy and teacher readiness still exist. Digitalisation should not occur at an extremely fast pace without ethical considerations that can lead to further inequalities and establish new exclusion patterns (World Bank, 2020). Capability wise, technology which fails to enlarge real freedoms cannot be deemed developmental progress.

## 8. Policy Implications

The policies on digital education should focus on quality, equity, and cultural responsiveness to guarantee the alignment to **Viksit Bharat**. This includes investment in multilingual platforms, community co-design, and educator training in culturally responsive digital pedagogy (Government of India, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

## 9. Conclusion

Digital education will be core of the **Viksit Bharat** vision of India, but it has not been realised equally by tribal communities. This paper believes that advancement in technology alone cannot lead to inclusion unless the digital form of education is incorporated in such frameworks as emphasize agency, cultural recognition and equity.

Based on the Capability Approach by Sen and the principles of inclusive education by UNESCO, the research provides a capability-based conceptual framework that refocuses the concept of digital education from access towards the outcomes of freedom. Through foregrounding conversion parameters of linguistic accessibility, indigenous knowledge systems and community involvement, the framework shows that digital education may grow the illusion of real freedoms instead of reproducing exclusion.

Thus, **Viksit Bharat** will not be determined by the magnitude of digital connectedness, but rather the degree to which education will help all the learners engage meaningfully in progress right on their own conditions.

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