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Research Paper

Self-Regulated Learning in Tribal Schools: Aligning with NEP 2020 Goals

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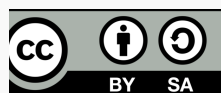
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Abstract

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) has emerged as an important approach for developing learners who are capable of planning, monitoring, evaluating, and taking responsibility for their own learning. In tribal schools, the development of self-regulated learning is particularly significant because learners often experience distinctive linguistic, geographical, socioeconomic, cultural, and educational circumstances. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a strong policy foundation for promoting learner-centred, experiential, competency-based, multilingual, and culturally responsive education. It emphasizes holistic development, flexibility in learning, foundational literacy and numeracy, the use of home and local languages, experiential learning, and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems, including tribal and indigenous knowledge. This article examines the relevance of Self-Regulated Learning in tribal schools and explores how SRL can contribute to the goals of NEP 2020. It discusses the conceptual dimensions of SRL, the educational context of tribal learners, the relationship between SRL and NEP 2020, classroom strategies for developing self-regulation, the role of teachers and communities, challenges in implementation, and possible policy and institutional interventions. The article argues that SRL should not be viewed merely as an individual psychological skill but as a culturally responsive educational process that can empower tribal learners to become independent, confident, reflective, and lifelong learners.

Keywords: Self-Regulated Learning, Tribal Education, Tribal Schools, NEP 2020, Learner Autonomy, Experiential Learning, Multilingual Education, Indigenous Knowledge, Holistic Education



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1 Introduction

Education is increasingly expected to move beyond the transmission of information and develop learners who can think independently, solve problems, make decisions, reflect on their experiences, and continue learning throughout life. This transformation is particularly important in tribal education, where educational experiences are influenced by local culture, language, community practices, geography, and access to educational resources. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a major shift towards

a learner-centred and holistic education system. The policy emphasizes conceptual understanding rather than rote learning, experiential and competency-based learning, flexibility, multilingualism, local context, and the development of students' capacities beyond academic achievement. NEP 2020 also explicitly recognizes the importance of tribal knowledge and indigenous ways of learning within the curriculum.

Within this framework, Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) offers a valuable pedagogical approach. Self-regulated learners are able to establish learning goals, select appropriate strategies, monitor their progress, identify difficulties, seek assistance when necessary, and evaluate their learning outcomes. Such capabilities can help students become increasingly responsible for their educational development. For tribal schools, however, SRL should not simply reproduce models developed in urban or highly resourced educational environments. It needs to be adapted to the cultural, linguistic, social, and ecological contexts of tribal communities. A culturally responsive model of SRL can connect classroom learning with local knowledge, community experiences, traditional practices, nature, agriculture, crafts, stories, oral traditions, and indigenous problem-solving.

2 Understanding Self-Regulated Learning

Self-Regulated Learning refers to the process through which learners actively manage their thoughts, motivation, behaviour, and learning strategies in order to achieve educational goals.

A self-regulated learner generally engages in three broad processes:

2.1 Planning

Before beginning a learning activity, students identify:

- What they need to learn
- What they already know
- What they want to achieve
- What resources they require
- How much time they need
- Which learning strategy may be useful

For example, a student learning about local biodiversity may decide to identify five plants found in the surrounding community, interview an elder about their traditional uses, record the information, and present the findings in class.

2.2 Monitoring

During learning, students examine their own progress.

They may ask:

- Am I understanding the topic?
- Which part is difficult?
- Do I need help?
- Is my learning strategy working?
- What additional information do I need?

Monitoring encourages students to become aware of their learning process rather than passively receiving information.

2.3 Reflection and Evaluation

After completing an activity, students evaluate:

- What did I learn?
- Did I achieve my objective?
- What difficulties did I experience?
- Which strategy worked?
- What should I do differently next time?

Reflection is particularly valuable in experiential and community-based learning.

3 Tribal Schools: The Educational Context

Tribal education in India operates within highly diverse cultural and geographical contexts. Tribal communities possess rich traditions of ecological knowledge, agriculture, crafts, oral literature, medicinal practices, social organization, environmental conservation, and community-based learning.

However, students in tribal and remote areas may face challenges such as geographical isolation, limited educational resources, teacher shortages, language barriers, socioeconomic constraints, and discontinuity between home experiences and formal schooling.

NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of making education relevant to learners' local contexts. It recommends that curriculum and pedagogy be rooted in Indian and local contexts, including culture, traditions, heritage, language, geography, and indigenous and traditional ways of learning.

This provides an important foundation for developing SRL in tribal schools. Rather than asking students to abandon their existing knowledge systems when they enter school, educators can use those experiences as starting points for formal learning.

For example:

*Traditional knowledge → Observation → Question → Investigation → Documentation
→ Reflection → New learning*

This process naturally supports self-regulated learning.

4 NEP 2020 and Self-Regulated Learning

Although the term "Self-Regulated Learning" may not be presented as a single standalone framework throughout NEP 2020, several major provisions of the policy strongly support the development of self-regulatory competencies.

4.1 Learner-Centred Education

NEP 2020 promotes a shift from teacher-centred instruction towards learner-centred and experiential approaches. Such approaches provide opportunities for students to participate actively in constructing knowledge rather than simply memorizing information.

SRL complements this objective by positioning students as active participants in their own learning.

4.2 Experiential Learning

The policy encourages experiential, hands-on, inquiry-based, and discovery-oriented learning.

Experiential learning creates natural opportunities for students to plan activities, collect information, solve problems, reflect on outcomes, and modify their approaches.

4.3 Multilingual Education

NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of the home language, mother tongue, local language, or regional language in the early years of education and encourages bilingual approaches where necessary.

For tribal learners, language-sensitive SRL strategies can make self-reflection and goal-setting more meaningful. Students may initially express learning goals and reflections in their home language before gradually developing equivalent expressions in the school language.

The Ministry of Education has also highlighted initiatives involving books in tribal languages, including languages such as Gondi, Garo, Khasi, Kokborok, Lepcha, Mizo, and Santhali.

4.4 Indian and Tribal Knowledge Systems

NEP 2020 explicitly calls for Indian Knowledge Systems, including tribal knowledge and indigenous and traditional ways of learning, to be incorporated into appropriate areas of the curriculum.

This creates significant opportunities for culturally relevant SRL.

Students can independently investigate:

- Traditional agricultural practices
- Forest conservation
- Indigenous medicinal knowledge
- Local biodiversity
- Tribal art and crafts
- Traditional games
- Oral histories
- Folk songs and stories
- Local architecture
- Traditional food systems
- Water conservation practices

4.5 Holistic Development

NEP 2020 seeks to develop learners intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically, ethically, and creatively rather than focusing exclusively on examination performance.

SRL contributes to this broader objective by developing metacognition, motivation, responsibility, persistence, self-awareness, and reflection.

5 A Model of Self-Regulated Learning for Tribal Schools

A culturally responsive SRL model for tribal schools can be organized into six stages:

Stage 1: Connect

The teacher connects the lesson with students' existing knowledge and community experiences.

Example: Before teaching environmental science, students discuss how their families use and protect local forests.

Stage 2: Set Goals

Students establish simple individual or group learning goals.

Example:

"I will identify five local plants and learn one traditional use of each plant."

Stage 3: Explore

Students investigate the topic through observation, discussion, interviews, field visits, experiments, reading, storytelling, or digital resources where available.

Stage 4: Monitor

Students maintain a learning diary or activity record.

They can document:

- What they discovered
- What they did not understand
- Who helped them
- What resources they used
- What they need to investigate further

Stage 5: Reflect

Students discuss what they learned and compare their initial understanding with their final understanding.

Stage 6: Apply

Students use their knowledge to solve a real-world problem or communicate their learning to others.

This can involve presentations, posters, demonstrations, community exhibitions, storytelling, local surveys, or school projects.

6 Classroom Strategies for Developing SRL**6.1 Learning Diaries**

Students can maintain simple learning diaries in which they answer three questions:

1. What did I learn today?
2. What was difficult?
3. What will I learn or do next?

The diary can initially be maintained in the student's home language or bilingually.

6.2 Student Goal Cards

Teachers can provide simple goal cards:

My Learning Goal

- My topic:
- What I already know:
- What I want to know:
- What I will do:
- Who can help me:
- What I learned:

Such tools gradually develop planning and monitoring skills.

6.3 Community-Based Projects

Community-based projects can be powerful SRL activities.

Possible projects include:

- Mapping local water sources
- Documenting traditional crops
- Recording local folk stories
- Studying local biodiversity
- Investigating traditional crafts
- Documenting traditional games
- Studying waste-management practices
- Recording local environmental changes

Students decide what information they need, collect evidence, analyse it, and present their findings.

6.4 Peer Learning

Peer learning can strengthen self-monitoring and social responsibility.

Students can work in small groups where they:

- Set common goals
- Divide responsibilities
- Monitor group progress
- Provide feedback
- Evaluate the final product

6.5 Reflective Questioning

Teachers can regularly ask:

- What did you discover?
- How did you discover it?
- Why did you choose this method?
- What evidence supports your answer?
- What would you do differently?
- Who could provide additional information?

Such questioning develops metacognitive awareness.

6.6 Portfolio Assessment

Instead of relying exclusively on examinations, students can maintain portfolios containing:

- Project reports
- Drawings
- Field notes
- Written reflections
- Photographs
- Interviews
- Maps
- Creative work
- Self-assessment records

Portfolio assessment makes student progress visible over time.

7 Role of Teachers in Promoting Self-Regulated Learning

Teachers remain central to the development of SRL. The goal is not to remove teacher guidance but gradually transfer responsibility from teacher to learner.

A teacher can move through the following progression:

Teacher demonstrates → Teacher guides → Students practise with support → Students work independently → Students evaluate their own learning

In tribal schools, teachers should also function as cultural facilitators. They can connect formal curriculum with local knowledge and community resources.

For example, an elderly community member with knowledge of traditional agriculture can become a resource person for a project on sustainable farming. Students can prepare questions, conduct an interview, document responses, compare traditional and contemporary practices, and reflect on what they learned.

This approach transforms the community into an extended learning environment.

8 Role of Parents and Tribal Communities

Self-regulated learning should not be restricted to the classroom.

Tribal communities possess extensive informal learning systems in which children traditionally learn through observation, participation, imitation, storytelling, practice, and interaction with elders.

Schools can build bridges between these community learning practices and formal education.

Parents and community members can support students by:

- Encouraging questioning
- Discussing children's school experiences
- Sharing traditional knowledge
- Supporting project activities
- Encouraging reading
- Providing opportunities for observation and practical learning
- Participating in school exhibitions
- Supporting students' learning goals

Such collaboration is consistent with NEP 2020's emphasis on local context and community participation.

9 Technology and Self-Regulated Learning

Digital technology can strengthen SRL when it is appropriately integrated. Students can use digital resources to:

- Search for information
- Watch educational videos
- Record interviews
- Photograph field observations
- Create presentations
- Maintain digital portfolios
- Access multilingual learning materials

However, technology should not become a substitute for teachers or community-based learning.

The digital divide must also be recognized. In areas with limited connectivity, schools can use offline digital resources, shared devices, radio, downloaded learning materials, community digital centres, and locally developed print materials.

NEP 2020 recognizes technology as an important component of educational transformation while also emphasizing inclusion and accessibility.

10 Challenges in Implementing SRL in Tribal Schools

Despite its potential, implementing SRL may involve several challenges.

10.1 Language Barriers

Students may have difficulty expressing their learning goals and reflections when the language of instruction differs from their home language.

Possible solution: Use multilingual and bilingual learning materials and allow students to initially reflect in their strongest language.

10.2 Teacher Preparedness

Teachers may require professional development in metacognition, formative assessment, project-based learning, culturally responsive pedagogy, and learner-centred approaches.

NEP 2020 places considerable emphasis on continuous professional development for teachers.

10.3 Examination-Oriented Culture

If success is measured primarily through examinations, students may have limited opportunities to develop independent learning strategies.

Possible solution: Strengthen formative, portfolio-based, project-based, and competency-oriented assessment.

10.4 Resource Constraints

Some tribal schools may have limited access to laboratories, libraries, internet connectivity, and digital devices.

Possible solution: Use the community and local environment as learning resources.

10.5 Large or Multigrade Classrooms

Teachers working with multiple grades may find individualized SRL support difficult.

Possible solution: Use peer learning, learning stations, group projects, student mentors, and self-learning materials.

10.6 Cultural Disconnect

Imported educational activities may not reflect the cultural experiences of tribal students.

Possible solution: Develop learning tasks rooted in local culture, environment, language, and community knowledge.

11 Assessment of Self-Regulated Learning

Assessment should measure not only what students know but also how they learn.

A simple SRL assessment framework can include five dimensions:

Dimension	Indicators
Goal Setting	Student establishes clear learning objectives
Planning	Student identifies strategies and resources
Monitoring	Student tracks learning progress
Help Seeking	Student identifies when assistance is required
Reflection	Student evaluates learning and identifies future improvements

Table 1: SRL Assessment Framework

Teachers can use a four-point scale:

- 4 – Highly Developed
- 3 – Developing Well
- 2 – Developing
- 1 – Requires Support

Assessment should be formative rather than punitive. The purpose is to help students gradually become more independent learners.

12 Conclusion

Self-Regulated Learning has considerable potential to transform learning experiences in tribal schools. It can help students move from passive recipients of information to active participants in their educational development. More importantly, SRL can be adapted to the distinctive cultural and educational contexts of tribal communities.

NEP 2020 provides a strong policy environment for such an approach through its emphasis on holistic education, experiential learning, multilingualism, learner-centred pedagogy, foundational learning, local context, and the integration of tribal and indigenous knowledge. For tribal learners, self-regulation should not mean learning in isolation. Rather, it should involve learning through relationships—with teachers, peers, families, elders, communities, nature, and cultural traditions. A child who learns to ask questions, set goals, investigate local problems, seek knowledge from different sources, reflect on experiences, and apply learning to community life is developing not only academic competence but also agency and lifelong learning capacity.

Therefore, integrating Self-Regulated Learning into tribal schools can become an important pathway for realizing the inclusive and transformative vision of NEP 2020. The ultimate objective should be to create tribal schools in which students' cultural identities are respected, their existing knowledge is valued, their languages are supported, and they are empowered to become confident, reflective, independent, and lifelong learners.

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