

Research Paper

Development of Indigenous Students through KISS Model of Holistic Education: An Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) is an educational institution which is only one of its kinds in the world. It offers free education along with free boarding and health care facilities to 40,000 indigenous children in its residential campus at Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India. The Founder of KISS, Professor Dr. Achyutananda Samanta established this institution in 1993. Since its inception, the purpose of KISS has been to transform the lives of thousands of indigenous children through quality education. It believes in the holistic development of such children and there by the development of our society by inculcating critical social skills and life skills in them which are core to the curriculum. Thus, the scholastic as well as the co-scholastic activities formulated and transacted through the curriculum designed by KISS focus on the physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional and social well-being of the indigenous children. The basic objective of this paper is to present the KISS Model of Education for the holistic development of the indigenous children and make an assessment of its effectiveness. This paper is based on case study and observation methods. Qualitative analysis has been done to project the outcome of the KISS Model of Holistic Education. The institute has been imparting teaching through Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education, English Access Micro-Scholarship Program, Employability Training Program and many such programs to address the UN Sustainable Development Goals by keeping its mission towards zero-dropout education system and gender equality. Besides these, Life Skills Education, Art Integrated Education, Sports Integrated Education, and Vocational Education as highlighted in National Education Policy, 2020 are too imparted in KISS for developing the ideology of peace and harmony among indigenous children. Looking at the performance of the students in various fields, it can be concluded that KISS Model of Holistic Education is running successfully in making the lives of indigenous children meaningful and productive.

Keywords: *Indigenous, Children, Holistic Development, SDGs, Life skills*

Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India is the biggest tribal institution in the world which offers free education along with free boarding and healthcare facilities to 40,000 indigenous children at present in its residential campus. KISS was established by the noted philanthropist Prof. Dr.

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Achyutananda Samanta only with 125 tribal students in 1993. KISS has gained unique recognition as a successful model for the educational empowerment of such underprivileged masses. With the mission to set up a better world, free from hunger, poverty and illiteracy, this institute provides free food, accommodation, health care and other basic facilities to the economically weaker indigenous children. It helps them pursue their studies from Kindergarten to Post Graduation and also to Ph. D. level, focusing on vocational education as well as life skills training to empower the youths of tribal communities (Mishra and Bal, 2014).

KISS was accorded the status of a Deemed to be University (U/S 3 of UGC Act 1956) by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India on 25th August 2017. Higher Education Wing of KISS offers admission to students in Arts, Commerce and Science streams for the Graduate, Post Graduate, and Ph.D. programs through seven schools housed in KISS Campus. Holistic education provided by KISS is a unique model that experimented with education for the eradication of poverty and as a tool for the empowerment of the underprivileged indigenous children. It focuses on inclusive education, women empowerment, tribal upliftment and sustainable development.

Studies conducted by eminent researchers like Nair and Neel (2021), Ahya (2020), Samal (2020), Bhullar and Maan (2020) enumerate the unparalleled stature of KISS in the upbringing of the ST children in the state of Odisha. Ahya (2020) conducted a study on KISS to explore the impact of education on socio-economic and psychological status of female students of tribal communities and revealed that KISS model of holistic education warrants all-round development of such learners and mitigates gender discrimination, heightens self-esteem of the female students and inculcates life skills by means of vocational training, financial self-reliance and social change. In his study regarding the contributions of KISS towards the empowerment of female tribal students, Samal (2020) highlighted that the institution provides quality education from Kindergarten to Ph.D. programs for tribal students. It imparts holistic education through various programs along with academic subjects. The emphasis given to such holistic education initiatives, helps to empower and strengthen the competency of tribal girls. Bhullar and Maan (2020) had undertaken a qualitative study to explore the contributions of KISS as a social entrepreneurship project, meant for sustainable development and observed that the institution is a successful model to enable tribal population through schooling. This institution could transform the potentials of tribal students to facilitate sustainability and progress in academic and extracurricular activities.

Initiatives of KISS for Holistic Development

Holistic development implies development of physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual abilities to enable one to face the day-to-day challenges of life. According to Sarkar (2020), 'holistic development essentially means the growth of intellectual, mental, physical, emotional, and social capacities in a child, so that he or she is competent enough to face the demands and challenges of everyday life'. Holistic development can be viewed as a reasonable approach to a complete learning system considering a child's integrated development. This mode of education anticipates learning to unfold in its full potential, makes learners capable of meeting daily life requirements and to face life with courage and confidence. Thus, holistic development stands for attaining all-round development of every individual.

Objective

The objective of this study is to present: (i) the KISS Model of Education for the holistic development of the indigenous children and (ii) make an assessment of its effectiveness.

Method

It is a Qualitative research study. Case study and observation methods have been adopted to assess the efficacy of KISS Model of Holistic Education.

RESULTS

The KISS Model of Holistic Development through Education

The socio-economic condition of indigenous people in Odisha was most pitiable because of severe poverty, low rate of literacy, lack of adequate schooling facilities, practice of child marriage, child labor, absence of proper healthcare and sanitation, and superstitious beliefs. The inception of KISS was inspired by the desire to alleviate the miseries of tribal people and to make them free from the hands of exploitations and shackles of dreadful living conditions. The Founder of KISS, the visionary leader Dr. Samanta realized that only education could help to emancipate the tribal population from their age-old problems and struggles. Therefore, he started KISS as a daring attempt amid financial constraints and limited resources to empower the downtrodden tribal people by educating their children. He foresaw the hindrances in imparting education to the children of these tribal communities because of the unavailability of teachers for teaching in remote areas, lack of adequate amount of food for children, insufficient healthcare, and low level of aspiration among tribal children and their parents. Besides these, the high drop-out rate due to household jobs, child marriage, improper sanitation facilities, sexual exploitation, child trafficking and militant insurgency activities of the Naxalites in tribal dominated districts of Odisha, add fuel to their educational backwardness.

The vision of KISS is to transform and empower the tribal society by providing need-based, demand-driven quality education. It is vision as well as the realisation of KISS that such a transformation is possible only through strengthening the roots of their families and communities. With appropriate and adequate intervention, it resulted in positive outcome when the thoughts went hand in hand with the philosophy of holistic education. Imbibing critical social skills like empathy, collaboration, and respect for fellow beings are core to the curriculum prescribed by KISS. The institute aims at the holistic development of society by empowering these individuals. Thus, the scholastic as well as the co-scholastic activities designed and transacted through the curriculum focus on the physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being of the tribal students by engaging them in yoga and physical exercises, vocational training, athletics and sports, spiritual dialogues and motivational programs. (Chadarava, 2019).

Samanta, Vikramaditya, & Singh (2017) have opined that the institute promises to protect, preserve and promote the rich tribal heritage and culture by celebrating tribal festivals, like Sakrat Parab, Maghe Parab, Chaita Parab and other festivals giving due importance and recognition to indigenous knowledge and skills. KISS is home to sixty-two tribes including thirteen PVTs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribes).

Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences distinguishes itself from other higher educational institutions through numerous unique activities and initiatives undertaken during this short period. The KISS model of holistic development-oriented education can be understood from

the following innovative practices other than the regular curricular activities run by this institution;

- **Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education**

The KISS has set up the world's largest centre for 'Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education' (MTBMLE) and offers programs in the dialects for transacting the curriculum to the tribal children. The institute adopted this pedagogical approach to cut off the language barriers by providing education in their native languages. The KISS adopted the strategy in 2013 by collaborating with the Bernardvan Leer Foundation (BvLF) and aimed at addressing the learning gaps that would otherwise arise in the early stages of education due to teaching and learning in Odia, the language of state of Odisha which is like a foreign languages unknown to the tribal children (Nair and Neel, 2021). The KISS has been awarded with the global recognition, being the recipient of the most prestigious UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize in 2022, for this innovative model. It has received a diploma, medal and endowment of US\$ 20,000 on the International Literacy Day in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. KISS is the first recipient from India and first from Odisha, third among non-profit NGOs and the first tribal organization in the globe to receive such a prestigious award.

- **English Access Micro-Scholarship Program**

In order to make the bright but non-elite students in the age group of 13 to 20 years, proficient in English language, KISS has associated itself with the US Department of State for implementing their 'English Access Micro Scholarship Program'. This Access Program aims to improve learners' appreciation of culture and values, develop critical thought, rational perspective, open-mindedness, and enhance academic outcomes. The program offers a basis for English language abilities to talented students from tribal communities. The program consists of activities related to project work, reading practice with comprehension, quizzes, puzzles and riddles, skits, and role-plays. Language games, dramatizations, simulations, group discussions, organization of debates, real-life contexts, use of newspaper clipping, multimedia usage and internet, teamwork and visits to the locations of scientific and historical importance also form a part of the program. The English Access Micro-Scholarship Program was successful and it helped many tribal students join higher education courses such as medicine, law and engineering.

- **Employability Training Program by TCS**

A free Employability Training Program has been organized at KISS campus in collaboration with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). The program is offered under the Affirmative Action Program of TCS, where employability training is provided to undergraduate students belonging to SC/ST/BPL/Minority communities for 100 hours in the fourth, fifth, and sixth semesters of their course (Bhatt and Sarangi, 2019).

- **Life Skills Based Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Education**

'Life Skills Education (LSE) based on Adolescent Reproductive Sexual Health (ARSH)' Education has been given to adolescents, in collaboration with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), since 2009 to empower the teenagers to face their life challenges effectively. Several programs have been started in KISS under this project to enhance the life skills among tribal students. Resource materials were primarily prepared at KISS for the same and the LSE programs are extended to tribal adolescents under the supervision of trained educators. More than 9000 students have been exposed to learn and utilize this

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facility. These life skills-based programs help adolescents to become aware of the process of conceptions under Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health (ARSH).

- **Mission Uday**

Mission Uday is a joint venture of Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Government of Odisha and the KISS. This unique program intends to build social entrepreneurship and leadership abilities among 1000 indigenous adolescents to mould value-oriented citizens who can extend their services, for social development in 1000 remote places of the state.

KISS in Realising Sustainable Development Goals

Keeping its own vision, KISS functions with the intention to realize the UN proclaimed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has a great role in fulfilling the SDGs in Indian context particularly in Odisha. Apart from free education, KISS takes holistic care of all the children by providing them quality education with free boarding and lodging as well as health care facilities in tune with SDGs. The nutritious food provision also curbs starvation and malnutrition among the children. As opined by Samanta, Vikramaditya, & Singh (2017), KISS in partnership with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has undertaken Life Skills based Sexual and Reproductive Health Education since 2009. ‘Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education’ meant for elementary level children and ‘English Access Micro-Scholarship Program’ is the example of its initiatives in providing quality education. The KISS also complies with the goal of SDGs inequality of gender as it has a significant number of female students’ representation in its academic courses as well as other pursuits. Besides partnership with British Council, KISS has launched the “Young Women Social Entrepreneurship Development Program”, which is sincerely being implemented at KISS. Through this program, training in advanced social enterprise is provided to the women master trainers. The KISS provides extreme care to utilize water in a hygienic manner as emphasized in the SDGs. By using modern technological gadgets, water is purified and used. KISS highlights the motto ‘Earn while you Learn’ for which it trains each one of its students in some vocational skill or the other like tribal paintings, candles, pickles, phenyl etc. The profits earned from the sale of these products are deposited in the bank account of the students involved in the making of such beautiful as well as useful products. This lays the foundation of future employment/self-employment of the students and their community as the institute arranges vocational training for the students (Hembram and Mohapatra, 2021). The KISS also promotes sustainable development through establishing sustainable communities, sustainable production and consumption, and partnership programs.

Prof. Dr. Achyutananda Samanta envisioned an education system that would provide every tribal child with an education that would create a sense of identity. The Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education provided at KISS aims at crafting empathetic children who stand as problem-solvers for their society. Inclusive classrooms of KISS bring up a generation that would aspire for their personal and societal development. Diversity and inclusion were the most critical challenges that KISS addressed in its drive towards a zero-dropout education system for the tribal students.

As women empowerment is the motto of the KISS, it advocates education for female students throughout its voyage. Gender equality, generally lacking in the tribal society, prevents their girls from reaching the higher strata of the society. To its credit, a good number of girls from KISS have excelled as sports personnel, engineers, doctors, teachers, social leaders, and civil servants among its alumni. KISS addresses the issue of gender

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equity as a core practice for the tribal girls to grab equal opportunities and have exposure like their male counter parts. This is quite evident in their excellent performance in academics and games and sports (Ghadai, 2016). Social illnesses among the marginalized societies, mainly include extreme hunger and poverty. KISS has also sorted out to a large extent the issues of drop-outs, helped improve the health conditions, stopped human trafficking, and prevented child marriages and child labor that are still prevalent among the tribal societies.

Left-wing extremism adversely affects the peaceful life of many tribal locales, as terrorists rule many of the forests, where the tribal people reside. The vital initiative of KISS in providing admissions to children from insurgent families has helped to create excellent scholars from among them. They have made their ways to get good jobs and helped to mainstream their alienated and disturbed families and societies to lead peaceful lives. Government records also show a sharp decline in Naxal and terrorist activists acknowledging the contribution and intervention of KISSians in this area.

The plantation, life skills and literacy drive initiated by KISS address the issues and concerns at the grassroots levels of the society. The initiative has helped build new dreams and new minds among the members of the society to develop their villages; thus, creeping up the hope of the commoner to a macro level. The technical support that KISS provided to five hundred government residential schools to attain the goal of grassroots empowerment, trained hundred resource persons, five hundred heads of schools and thousand five hundred teachers under the transformational program.

Glimpses of the Successful Students

The students of KISS are placed under various sectors and achieved success in various fields too. Success stories of some of the students of KISS are mentioned below:

- **Ms. Shanti Murmu** engaged as Mahatma Gandhi National Fellow, Ministry of Skill development and Entrepreneurship, IIM, Bangalore.
- **Dr. Hisi Soren** is the first scholar to hold Ph.D. degree from KISS Deemed to be University, joined in KISS College as a Lecturer in Education.
- **Mr. Sanatan Majhi** joined in Infosys Ltd. as Operations Executive in 2017 and worked as Revenue Inspector, Revenue and Disaster Management, Govt. of Odisha, qualified in Odisha Civil Service Examinations.
- **Mr. Biram Biruli** won Odisha Startup Yatra 2.0 and felicitated by Shri Naveen Pattnaik, Former Chief Minister, Odisha with a cheque of one lakh. He was also the 1st Runners up of the Open Boot Camp organized by KIIT TBI.
- **Ms. Jashmi Hembram** a Ph.D. scholar cleared UGC NET-JRF in 2022, working as a Lecturer in Education under Higher Education, Odisha as well as a Santali News Anchor in Kalinga TV Channel.
- **Mr. Amar Kumar Muska** secured second position at National level for his Project under 'Development of Easy and Cost Effective DNA Extraction and Purification Protocol' in 2023.
- **Ms. Sanjukta Singh** selected for higher studies in Weiss High School in Pflugerville, Texas with a full scholarship from the US government.
- **Ms. Mamata Dalai** received the National Bravery Award, 2017 from Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi. She had rescued her sister from a crocodile's mouth while they were taking bath in her village, Bankuala, Kendrapara district.

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- **Ms. Sumitra Nayak**, nominated as the captain of KISS Girl's Rugby team and delivered a talk at TEDx Pune, being the first representative from the tribal community to share ideas on this prestigious platform. She was nominated for the prestigious International Children's Peace prize, 2017, working in Police Department, Government of Odisha.

Major Findings

KISS imparts holistic education through various programs such as value-added training, multi-lingual learning, social entrepreneurship training, counseling sessions, personality development programs, vocational skills training, training in games and sports along with the academic courses. It can be concluded that the KISS is significant for its unique model of holistic educational program to educate and empower the tribal students. The institution provides a healthy, safe and nurturing environment for students by engaging them in various activities such as: yoga and physical exercises, vocational training, athletics and sports, spiritual dialogues and motivational programs. Special motivational and promotional steps are being taken for female students for their confidence building and to be at par with their male counter parts. The education provided by KISS has a positive impact on the socio-economic and psychological status of both male and female students of tribal communities. The functioning of KISS for the empowerment of tribal community is laudable and its effectiveness in transforming the lives of the indigenous children is highly recognized and appreciated worldwide (Misra & Bal, 2014; Kanti, 2015; Ghadai, 2016; Samanta, Vikramaditya & Singh, 2017; Bhatt & Sarangi, 2019; Chadarava, 2019; Samal, 2020; Ahya, 2020, Bhullar & Maan, 2020; Sarkar, 2020; Nair & Neel, 2021; Hembram & Mohapatra, 2021).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The case studies cited above are just a few illustrations on the achievements of students of KISS and then there are many more. Teachers' involvement and mentoring as well as exposure to an enriched and stimulating educational environment enhance their interest, motivation and competency to learn their subjects and skills with pleasure for their personal and academic growth. The institution is to be seen to be believed, how the vision and dedication of the Founder Dr. Achyuta Samanta has bloomed leading to fruition. Many people think, talk and dream about educating the tribal children but people hardly realize their dreams. Dr. Samanta, Founder of KISS has finally made it possible to make his dreams come true. KISS Model of Education should be adopted worldwide for the holistic development of indigenous students, making them at par with privileged ones, providing them with better life conditions, education, employment, high self-esteem, happiness and joy.

Implications

Holistic development of the children is the need of the hour and it is feasible only when the children are exposed to academic and extra-curricular activities. Today is the day of information and multi-tasking is a way of life. We have to promote talent or the general competency of students through regular monitoring, guidance, counseling as well as effective intervention programs for their all-round development. Our indigenous children are marginalized and are deprived of a stimulating home and school environment for their cognitive, social and emotional developments. They live in abject poverty and grope in darkness without any specific goals. Parental illiteracy and low expectations regarding the educational attainment of these children stand as barriers in promoting education among the indigenous people. KISS Model of Holistic Education is not only addressing to the basic

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needs of these children in terms of free food and accommodation, it is also providing Mother-tongue based Education, a very conducive environment for the teaching-learning practices with trained teachers, teaching aids and well-equipped laboratories. Games and sports are given priorities in the institution as these children have a natural propensity to excel in this domain and which in turn facilitates their holistic development. The unique experimentation of KISS stands as a model for the government to spend wealth in a productive manner for the empowerment of weaker sections of the society.

For more than thirty years, KISS has been directly and indirectly transforming the lives of millions of indigenous children. Interventions of KISS in education, health care, employment, vocational training, climate change, and sustainable development have developed the ideology of peace and harmony among the tribal people.

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Conflict of Interest

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