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3-Language Policy in School Education: A Review from Independence to NEP 2020

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Abstract:

The language is the centre point of the economic and social progress of the general public. When there is language, there is society and advancement. Language plays an important role in the formation of societies, countries and nations. So, a country needs well defined and futuristic education policy at school and college levels. Today India is a multilingual country with 22 official languages and over a thousand other languages. In India, language in education has been widely debated from its independence. It has been clearly reflected in the National Education Policy 2020. In the

Meantime, Government of India announced its New Education Policy 2020 based on the recommendations of an expert committee headed by Dr Kasturirangan, Former Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). In this paper, the researchers intend to investigate the need for Language Policy for education, historical perspectives of Language Policy on Indian education and the present situation in India.

Keywords: Language, language in education, multilingualism, three language policy, society.

1. Introduction:

Language as a means of communication is very much crucial to the whole process of education. It is through language that everything is taught and learnt in most teaching-learning situations. There are also some non-verbal means and methods through which learning can take place. But it is mostly through verbal means i.e., language that education is imparted in formal settings. In modern world, there are around 6000 dialects assembled under different language families spoken in 200 countries¹. India is a multi-lingual country with 1652 mother tongues as per the census of India 1961², though many of these languages are not well developed. But these are used as their means of communication. They do not know any other languages. Thus, a large number of such languages have been accepted as a medium or as the subject by the educational system for meeting needs of small and remote regions. Language is vital part of our education system in

¹ Varghese.L, Devi T.S(2022), NEP 2020: An Analysis of Three Language Policy, Global Journal of Applied Engineering in Computer Science and Mathematics (GJAECSMA) – Special Edition 1 – Apr 2022, ISSN(Online): 2582-9939 (accessed on 05.04.2023)

² Ibid; Footnote-1



our country. It functions effectively in strengthening the societal structure in general including imparting inclusive education to the children in particular. India is a federal democratic country having diversity in language. So, no importance or emphasis is given on local or regional languages compared to other languages in the country and in this regard many efforts have been made to bring the three-language formula in education. Educational language Policy aims for the preservation and development of all Indian languages by protecting and promoting their use in various level of education with a legal framework. The Policy give emphasis on universal access to quality education for social justice and equality, scientific expansion, national incorporation and cultural conservation. If the policy is implemented well with better coordination with other policies, then it will be appropriate and will definitely help in transforming Indian education and language system in many perspectives.

2. Need for Language Policy in Education:

India has an extremely rich literature in classical languages such as Classical Tamil, Classical Telegu, Malayalam etc. In addition, Pali, Persian and Prakrit, these classical languages should be preserved for their richness and for the pleasure and enrichment of next generation. When India becomes a developed country, the future citizen of the country will intend to take share in language progressing process and be enriched as human.

In order to remove the controversy of language policy, three-language formula has taken numerous structures in India depending on States and their own authority and nearby language. Considering Hindi and English as basic subject to all, they change from the primary stage, second and third language depending on the State's administration. In Hindi speaking states, the third language will be English or a modern Indian language not studied as the second language and in non -Hindi speaking states the third language will be English or a modern Indian language not studied as the second language.

Though the revised graduated three language formula has been recommended by the Education Commission and also been accepted by the Government of India, but the general pattern of language instruction is not identical in all parts of the country. It varies from State to State according to the difference in the use frugally and distribution of the various linguistic communities and the language policies of the respective State Government. The National Education Policy again has no provision for reservation of minorities and tribal population. Besides these, the NEP lay emphasis on the ancient Indian knowledge system and do not pay importance on the ongoing educational system.

3. Meaning of Three Language Policy:

The chief aim of three language policy is to promote and strengthen the inter-caste communication and healthy relation among the states. It is generally known that the three



languages referred to Hindi, English and the regional language of the respective States. Though Hindi was incorporated into three language policy in an official document only in National Policy on Education 1968³ by the then Indira Gandhi Government. According to this document the regional languages⁴ were already in use as the media of education in the primary and secondary stages. Again, at the secondary stage State Government should adopt and vigorously implement the three-language formula which includes the study of a modern Indian languages preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in the Hindi speaking States. In the non-Hindi speaking States, Hindi should be studied along with the regional language and English. Different suitable courses in Hindi or English should be available in colleges and Universities with a view for improving the proficiency of students in these languages up to the prescribed University Standard. The modern Indian languages should also be developed for inter -state communication.

4. Aims and objectives of the Study:

Considering NEP 2020 Policy, it is intended

- i. To highlight the importance of appropriate language policy all over India.
- ii. To highlight the historical background of language policy. and
- iii. To predict the required improvement of language policy in India.

5. Background of Evolution of 3-Language Formula in India:

Education is in the state subject up to the school level. So the execution of three language formula depends on State Government decision. Some States agreed the new education policy 2020 on primary stage. Few Hindi-speaking states such as Bihar, UP, MP considered Sanskrit as third language, whereas some other Non-Hindi speaking States such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala did not execute three language formula. They took two-language formula such as one is English and the other is mother tongue. Keeping English to the side, the introduction of local language and mother tongue from the lower school was emphasized by some state. But we are living in a and our schooling frame work should empower us to accomplish world-wide guideline including English as worldwide dialect. Our national unity depends largely on this problem.

But, in India during Aryan's period, there was no problem regarding the Language issue. Then only Sanskrit acted as strong unifying force throughout country. Persian language took the place of Sanskrit as the official or court language during Muslim Rule. With the advent of British, English became the official language and the language of the elite of this country. In this time English was regarded as the social prestige and the way of obtaining official job. English became the medium of instruction in all the educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities. English

³Ibid; see Footnote-1

⁴Ibid; see Footnote-1



language also introduced as compulsory subject in school and colleges. As a result modern Indian languages were naturally neglected.

After India has got independence, the national leader strongly advocated in favor of mother tongue as the medium of education (Mention the Source, if possible). They also told for the development of modern Indian Language and Hindi as the official language in place of English (Mention the Source). But situation has fundamentally changed with the declaration of the new Constitution in its Eighth Schedule (Mention the Source) which gives higher priority to Hindi as the official language in future. This has created controversy in the academic and non-academic domains. This question of language has created threat to our national unity. So, the language study needs a careful review and consideration.

5. Review of Language-Policies recommended by different Education Commissions in Independence India:

1) The University Education Commission (1948-49)⁵:

According to the recommendations of University Education Commission, the following points may be described:

- i) The regional language should be developed.
- ii) The Federal language should be developed through the assimilation of words from various sources and the retention of words which have already extend into Indian languages from different sources. The basis for Federal language would be provided by Western Hindi (*Devangri Scripts*).
- iii) International technical and Scientific terminology be adopted, the borrowed words be properly assimilated, their pronunciation be adapted to the phonetic system of the Indian languages.
- iv) The student of the higher secondary and university stages was made familiar with three languages- the regional language or the mother tongue, the federal language and English.
- v) The State government should take steps to introduce the compulsory education in Federal Languages (Hindi) in H.S Schools, colleges and Universities.
- vi) For the medium of instruction for higher education, English be replaced as early as practicable by an Indian language which cannot be Sanskrit.

2) Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)⁶:

The Secondary Education Commission appointed by the Government of India, after considering the federal language or the official language of the Centres, the areas with different parts of the

⁵[Radhakrishnan Commission Report of 1948-49.pdf](#) (accessed on 02.06.2023)

⁶[1953 Secondary Education Commission Report.pdf](#) (accessed on 02.06.2023)



country may divided into three regions- 1) regions where Hindi is the mother tongue, 2) regions where Hindi is not mother tongue but is spoken by a large number of people of the regions, and 3) regions where Hindi is not the mother tongue i.e., the non-Hindi speaking area.

The Commission has tried to solve crucial and controversial issue of medium of instruction in the following way:

- (i) Mother tongue or regional language or composite course of the mother tongue or a classical language.
- (ii) One other language to be chosen from the other followings:
 - a) Hindi for those where mother tongue is not Hindi.
 - b) Elementary English of those who have not studies English in middle stage.
 - c) A modern Indian language (other than Hindi)
 - d) A modern foreign language other than English.
 - e) A classical language.

3) Central Advisory Board for Education (1920) ⁷:

This is the oldest and most important advisory body of the Government of India in education. It also recommended the acceptance of three-language formula in education.

4) Kothari Commission (1964-66)⁸:

The Education Commission appointed by the Government of India is also known as the Kothari Commission 1964-66. By considering the different aspects of subjects' area which need to be highlighted with particular reference to our national and educational goals. The Education Commission made some important recommendation regarding medium of instruction. In this aspect the CABE in 1956 examined at length the complex problem of teaching the languages in relation to the needs of the country and the requirements of the constitution. It devised a formula known as the three-language formula. By overcoming some difficulties, the Commission forms a basis for workable Three language formula which are helpful in evolving workable language formula in schools.

- (i) Hindi is the official language of the Union and is expected in due course of time to become the lingua franca of the country.
- (ii) English will continue to enjoy a high standard so long as it remains the principal medium of education at the University stage.

⁷Sanikop. P.I, Nayak . R.M (2022), Language policy in education in India and National education policy 2020, International journal of Applied Research, Vol-8 (6), pg- 38-42, ISSN-2394-5869

⁸[Kothari Commission 1964-66.pdf](#) (accessed on 02.06.2023)



- (iii) The stage at which Hindi or English should be introduced on a compulsory basis as a second language.
- (iv) At no stage should learning of four languages be made compulsory. But provision of studying four or over more languages should be available.
- (v) The most suitable stage for making the learning of three languages compulsory appears to be that lower secondary stage.

Therefore, the commission recommends a modified or graduated three language formula to include:

- a) The mother tongue or the regional language.
- b) The official language of the Union or the associate official language of the Union so long as it exists, and
- c) A modern Indian or Foreign language not covered (a) or (b) and other than that used as the medium of instruction

5) National Policy on Education 1968⁹:

Indira Gandhi Government has incorporated the three language formula in the National Policy on Education 1968 in the following way:

- (i) The regional languages are already in use as media of education as the primary and secondary stages. At the university level, to adopt them urgent steps to be taken.
- (ii) **The Three-Language Formula:** At the secondary stage the State government should adopt and vigorously implement the three-language formula which include the study of a modern Indian language, preferably one of the southern languages, apart from Hindi and English in Hindi-speaking areas and of Hindi along with the regional language and English in the non-Hindi speaking areas. Suitable courses in Hindi and English should also be available in universities and colleges.
- (iii) **Hindi:** Every effort should be taken to promote the development of Hindi. In making Hindi as the link language, due care should be taken.
- (iv) **Sanskrit:** Keeping in mind the special importance in Sanskrit with the growth and development of Indian languages and its unique contribution to the cultural unity of the country, facilities for its teaching at the school and university level should be offered on a moral and liberal scale.
- (v) **International Language:** Special importance need to be taken on the study of English and other international languages. India must not only keep up this growing development but

⁹Mondol. D.K, Nag. S , Dasgupta R.S (2013), Foundations and Development of Education, Kolkata, Rita Publication.



should also make her own significant contribution to it. thus study of English deserves to be specially strengthened.

6) Iswarbhai Patel Committee (1977):

This committee recommended the determining pattern of languages to be taught. It also gave importance for Kothari Commission recommendations and gave emphasis on implementing three-language formula of Kothari Commission in Education.

7) The National Policy on Education (1979):

As per direction of National Policy on Education 1979, the three-language formula will be acted at the secondary stage. It also includes the study of a modern Indian language preferred by a South Indian language in addition to Hindi and English in Hindi speaking areas.

8) National Policy on Education 1986:

The National Policy on Education 1986 made no improvement in the 1968 arrangement on the three-language formula implementation. Education is the State subject upto the school level. so the implementation of the three-language formula depends also on state opinion. In principle, only few states introduced the formula. It is noted that the NPE 1986 does not make any change in the NPE 1968 in regard to the three-language formula and the promotion of Hindi.

9) National Education Policy 2020¹⁰ and Language in Education:

Languages influences the way of people of a given culture including the family members, authority figures, peers and strangers and also influence the tone of conversation. Culture is thus encashed in our language. Language is associated with art, play, music, film etc. Culture's Language must be preserved and promoted in preserving and promoting a culture. According to UNESCO, 197 Indian languages are in endangered because these languages have not received their due attention and care and thus India has lost 220 languages in the last 50 years. Again, 22 languages of eighth schedule of the constitution of India are not officially on such endangered condition. These languages are facing serious difficulties on many fronts. Teaching and learning need to be integrated with school and higher education at every level, there must be a steady stream of high-quality teaching and print materials in the languages are important to remain language relevant and vibrant.

Education is an instrument in bringing about national unity in a multilingual nation and it is also responsible for maintaining multilingualism and national unity in a country. It also plays a vital role in progressing the presentation and development of all Indian languages. National

¹⁰ [nep_2020.pdf](#) (accessed on 05.04.2023)



Education Policy gave emphasis on universal access to quality education for social justice and equality, scientific expansion and cultural conservation. Mother tongue is considered as the medium of education at the primary level. In accordance with NPE 2020, the inclusion of vernacular in education will give new life to endangered languages and help the children to be connected with the culture. So, the three-language formula must be implemented as soon as possible to promote multilingualism from the school level. New Education Policy also gave importance on promoting and protecting the indigenous languages by giving special status to those languages in imparting the formal education.

6. Discussion about the Language Policy of NEP 2020:

There are both Positive and Negative aspects within the NEP 2020 regarding the Language-Policy, which are discussed below-

6.1 Some of the Positive Aspects revealed in the Language Policy of NEP 2020:

- Promoting multilingualism in teaching and learning and increasing the power of language.
- Enjoyable and inspirational book will be written in local and Indian languages and that will be available in educational institution as well as in public libraries.
- States from different regions of India come into bilateral agreement to hire teachers from each other to satisfy their three-language formula in the respective states and also to encourage the study of Indian languages across the country.
- All efforts should be made to bridge the gaps existing between the language spoken by the child and the medium of teaching. In this case the teachers will be encouraged to use a bilingual approach.
- There will be a flexibility in the three-language formula and no language will be imposed on any state.
- Indian Sign Language (ISL) will be introduced across the country and National and State curriculum materials will be developed for students with hearing impairment. Local sign languages will be respected and taught as possible and relevant.
- The three-language learned by children will be choice of States, regions and of the course the students themselves. But they are to take at least the two languages out of three languages.
- Efforts are to be made in preparing high quality bilingual textbooks and teaching-learning materials for science and mathematics. So. the students are capable to think and speak in their mother tongue and in English.
- The curricular and pedagogical structure and the curricular framework for school education will be followed by 5+3+3+4 design.
- Utilization of technology in teaching and learning in removing language barriers.



- Special attention will be given in employing local teachers to meet the educational needs of the students.
- According to Constitutional provisions, the three-language formula will be continued to implement throughout the country.
- Technology as aids helps the teacher to remove any language barriers between teacher and student.

6.2 Some of the Negative Aspects revealed in the Language Policy of NEP 2020:

- Importance was given on local language and Mother Tongue keeping aside English from the lower grade of school, deprives the lower strata of society from access to higher education. We are living in a globalized work, so our educational system should enable us to attain global standard which can be achieved only by having a command over international languages like English.
- National Education Policy 2020 has no provision for reservation of Minorities and Tribal Population NEP overlooks the constitutional provisions of providing the opportunities and privilege for the minorities and other reserved communities.
- NEP give emphasis on the Ancient Indian Knowledge system and pedagogy developed through centuries of research in the past. But it does not look forward with certain vision.
- It is an attempt to curtail the application of multiple pedagogies and impose a single system on all.
- The risk of impositions of Indian culture and practices on the tribal population is very high in this policy. It does not give importance on the plurality of culture of our country.
- While taking about the tribal areas, the policy introduces Ashram's Halas- a Sanskrit term. It does not recognize the distinct tribal culture tradition.

7. Conclusion:

In a multilingual country like India, multilinguist is favored when all dialects are correlative to each other. Language plays a vital role in the life of man. National unity depends largely on this. From our experience, it has been observed that instructor who have worked with their first language have added to both and become well known. Even today English writing is necessary for global acknowledgement. There are surprisingly more minorities language and the ancestral language. Many of them are on the edge of termination. The refusal of linguistic rights not only hampers the social progress of a local area but also preventing the social and financial development of a minority as well as for the general public. In the way of getting advancement and media advantage, sometimes an associate of predominant dialects, minority dialects and ancestral dialects show annoyance with each other and as a result of this competition, some dialects have already been lost. This view is also taken as the unavoidable cost to be paid for financial modernization and



social uniformity will be saved. After many experiments towards improving the language use in education from Vedic period to till date the New Education Policy 2020 now has been announced in line with public aspirations and according to national needs and challenges.

The policy has created a pool of education and trained human resources. With the implementation of the new NPE 2020, the Indian education system become balance in quality closer to international standard. It is a big revolution replacing the 34-year-old policy idea. The Policy has maintained a clear and fine balance between the traditions and the interdisciplinary approach that India is waiting for. If the policy is effectively implemented and education system efficiently monitored, then it will be far-reaching policy and definitely help in transforming Indian Education and language system in many perspectives. It is also added that New Education Policy is undoubtedly a progressive and ambitious policy.

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