



Language Policy of School Education In The Light Of NEP 2020: Implications, Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract: *In the Indian educational landscape The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 a paradigm shift, presented language policy as one its core vision suggesting inclusive and holistic development of learners. This paper critically examines the language policy outlined in NEP 2020, focusing on its implications for school education explain the existing system and the relevant changes for implementation of NEP 2020. Through a comprehensive review of related literature, the study explores the historical context, policy perspectives, and anticipated outcomes of the three-language formula in the light of the policy. The study employs qualitative content analysis to evaluate policy documents, scholarly articles, and expert commentaries. Findings highlight the potential of NEP 2020 to foster multilingualism, cultural integration, and cognitive development. It has also identified challenges for implementation of language policy, teacher preparedness to teach language as a school subject and medium of instruction and regional disparities to implement. The paper concludes with recommendations for effective policy execution, means to encourage language based inclusivity and suggestions for future research.*

Keywords: *NEP 2020, Language Policy, Three-Language Formula, School Education, Multilingualism, language based Inclusivity.*

1. Introduction: Language is a key of instruction and socialization in educational systems gets worldwide reception with it. In the Indian context, linguistic diversity is both a cultural asset and a policy challenge. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, approved by the Government of India, seeks to address longstanding issues in language instruction and promote multilingualism as a means to enhance learning outcomes and social cohesion (Ministry of Education, 2020). This paper analyzes the language policy articulated in NEP 2020, with a particular focus on its implications for school education.

In NEP 2020 special emphasis is given on ancient Indian languages. This is for the first time, in NEP, special emphasis is given to promote and protect the scripts of endangered languages to avoid of being obsolete. The tribal languages are also seen in the linguistically critical stage in the new education policy. The NEP 2020's language policy is rooted in the recognition of India's rich linguistic heritage and the need for a flexible, student-centric approach to language learning. The policy's emphasis on the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction up to Grade 5, and preferably till Grade 8. The policy emphasizes that children learn languages quickly between the ages of 2 and 8, and that multilingualism holds great cognitive benefits. It will increase national unity when Mother tongue will be used as a medium of instruction and

expression for the primary level. Before NEP 2020, English language got a huge boost and all the official communication was done in English. English language was treated as a model for aristocracy, superiority, status and influence. This mono-lingualism was destroying the advancement of Indian native languages and the glory of English was surpassing the superiority of Indian languages on Indian society. The language guideline as per NEP 2020 will undoubtedly boost confidence among the Indian youths to study Indian languages with pride. It will uphold their logistic rights and establish linguistic diversity. This has generated significant debate among educators, policymakers, and linguists. This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the NEP 2020 language policy, examining its objectives, implementation challenges, and potential impact on educational equity and quality.

2. Objectives: The primary objectives of this research paper are:

- To analyze the language policy provisions in NEP 2020 concerning school education.
- To examine the implications of the three-language formula for multilingualism and educational outcomes.
- To identify challenges and opportunities in implementing the NEP 2020 language policy.
- To provide recommendations for effective policy implementation and suggest directions for future research.

3. Review of Related Literature:

3.1 Historical Context of Language Policy in India: India's linguistic diversity has shaped its educational policies since independence. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) first proposed the three-language formula to promote national integration and cultural pluralism (Kothari Commission, 1966). The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 and 1986 reiterated this approach, emphasizing the importance of mother tongue instruction and the need for a link language (Government of India, 1986). However, implementation has been uneven, with variations across states and resistance in certain regions (Annamalai, 2001).

3.2 Theoretical Perspectives on Multilingual Education: Research indicates that instruction in the mother tongue during early years enhances cognitive development and academic achievement (Cummins, 2000; UNESCO, 2003). Multilingual education fosters metalinguistic awareness, cultural identity, and social inclusion (Mohanty, 2009). However, challenges such as teacher proficiency, resource availability, and sociopolitical factors influence the effectiveness of language policies (Mohanty, 2019).

3.3 NEP 2020: Key Provisions on Language Policy: NEP 2020 advocates for the use of the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction at least until Grade 5, with a preference for continuation till Grade 8 (Ministry of Education, 2020). The policy reiterates the three-language formula, allowing states flexibility in implementation. It also emphasizes the development of high-quality bilingual teaching-learning materials and teacher training.

3.4 Implementation Challenges: Scholars have highlighted challenges in operationalizing the NEP 2020 language policy, including infrastructural constraints, shortage of trained teachers, and sociopolitical resistance (Jhingran, 2020; Panda & Mohanty, 2021). The diversity of languages and dialects within states further complicates policy execution (Bose & Choudhury, 2019).

3.5 Empirical Studies on Language Policy Outcomes: Empirical studies suggest that mother tongue-based multilingual education improves learning outcomes, especially among marginalized groups (Mohanty, 2009; Nag, 2017). However, studies also caution against one-size-fits-all approaches and advocate for context-sensitive implementation (Panda & Mohanty, 2021).

4. **Methodology:** This research adopts a qualitative content analysis approach to examine the language policy provisions in NEP 2020 and their implications for school education. Primary sources include official policy documents, such as the NEP 2020 and previous national education policies. Secondary sources comprise peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reports from national and international organizations. The analysis focuses on identifying key themes, challenges, and opportunities in the policy's formulation and implementation.

The following steps were undertaken:

- Collection of policy documents and scholarly literature related to language policy in Indian education.
- Thematic coding and analysis of content related to the objectives, implementation strategies, challenges, and outcomes of the NEP 2020 language policy.
- Synthesis of findings to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

5. Analysis

5.1 **NEP 2020's Language Policy: Provisions and Rationale:** The NEP 2020's language policy is grounded in the belief that early education in the mother tongue or home language leads to better comprehension and cognitive development (Ministry of Education, 2020). The policy's major provisions include:

- **Medium of Instruction:** Mother tongue or regional language up to at least Grade 5, preferably till Grade 8.
- **Three-Language Formula:** Flexibility for states to choose three languages, with at least two being native to India.
- **Bilingual Materials and Teacher Training:** Emphasis on developing high-quality bilingual teaching-learning materials and training teachers in multilingual pedagogy.

The rationale behind these provisions is supported by research on the cognitive and socio-emotional benefits of mother tongue instruction (Cummins, 2000; UNESCO, 2003).

5.2 **Three language formula in multilingual context:** According to NEP 2020, the three-language formula will be followed to promote multilingualism and national unity.

NEP suggests that no language will be imposed any state and greater flexibility will be given in three-language formula.

The three-language formula emphasises that state governments will adopt and implement study of:

- (i) Hindi, English and a modern Indian language (preferably a southern language) in the Hindi-speaking states, and
- (ii) Hindi, English and the regional language in the non-Hindi speaking states.

The choice of languages will be decided by the States, regions, and students themselves, as long as at least 2 of the 3 languages are native to India.

5.3 **Implementation Challenges:** While the NEP 2020 language policy is progressive in intent, several challenges impede its effective implementation:

- **Linguistic Diversity:** India is home to over 22 scheduled languages and hundreds of dialects (Census of India, 2011). Developing teaching materials and recruiting teachers proficient in all local languages is a significant challenge.

- **Teacher Preparedness:** Many teachers lack proficiency in the mother tongues of their students, particularly in urban and linguistically diverse classrooms (Jhingran, 2020).
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited availability of textbooks, digital resources, and assessment tools in regional languages hampers effective instruction (Bose & Choudhury, 2019).
- **Sociopolitical Factors:** Language is a sensitive issue in India, with political resistance to the imposition of certain languages in some states (Panda & Mohanty, 2021).
- **Parental Aspirations:** Many parents, especially in urban areas, prefer English-medium education due to perceived socio-economic advantages (Annamalai, 2001).

5.4 Opportunities and Potential Benefits: Despite these challenges, the NEP 2020 language policy offers several opportunities:

- **Promotion of Multilingualism:** Encourages linguistic pluralism, cultural preservation, and national integration.
- **Improved Learning Outcomes:** Research supports the positive impact of mother tongue instruction on literacy and academic achievement (Nag, 2017).
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Benefits marginalized and tribal communities by validating their languages and cultures in the education system (Mohanty, 2009).
- **Teachers' Professional Development:** Emphasis on teacher training in multilingual pedagogy can enhance instructional quality.
- **Improved cognitive load management:** use of native language to learn complex concept helps to reduce cognitive load and causes deeper understanding. On the other hand bilingual approach helps to acquire proficiency in multiple languages simultaneously.
- **Bridging the rural-urban gap:** providing high quality textbooks and materials in mother tongues will help to bridge the educational opportunities based on geographical variations.

5.5 Comparative Perspectives: Comparative studies indicate that countries with strong mother tongue-based multilingual education policies, such as Ethiopia and the Philippines, have reported improved student engagement and learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2003). However, successful implementation requires sustained investment in teacher training, resource development, and community engagement.

6. Conclusion: The NEP 2020's language policy represents a significant step towards inclusive and equitable education in India. By prioritizing the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction and promoting multilingualism through the three-language formula, the policy aligns with global best practices and research evidence. However, its success hinges on addressing challenges related to linguistic diversity, teacher preparedness, resource availability, and sociopolitical dynamics.

Effective implementation requires a context-sensitive approach, robust teacher training programs, and active involvement of local communities. Policymakers must also address parental aspirations and ensure that the transition to regional language instruction does not compromise access to English and other global languages. There is need of considerable effort resolving the issues relating to the language of instruction in schools. Hail from the deserved and undeserved communities may be helpful in this perspective. For putting multilingual policy active there is need to give special attention to be culturally sensitive and empathetic to prevent any potential prejudice or discrimination in their teaching methods. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the impact of the NEP 2020 language policy on learning outcomes, social integration, and economic mobility.

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