



National Education Policy 2020 and Multilingualism in India

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Abstract— *The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India casts its attention on establishing the interconnection between languages and the medium of instruction for teaching and learning. The present essay is going to deal with the role of languages in NEP – 2020 and figure out its recommendations to be imparted in the areas of medium of instruction, classical languages, foreign languages, and Indian Sign Language. The article underlines the factors that can either be proved positive or not by a concern on how NEP revised language related proposals can be implemented now through a review of existing literature and policy documents. The study demonstrates the emphasis that this policy places on mother tongue-based multilingual education in the early pedagogical years. As well, it encourages the usage of English language and other languages. The NEP as a policy of the language seeks for celebration of the linguistic diversity of India, improved lecturing outcomes and equips the students with the necessary and requisite necessary to perform in the 21st century; eventuality calls for the logical problem solving that involves teacher training and resource development. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India is at the very core a paradigm shifts in the country's education framework with a focus placed in multilingualism promotion. This article delves into the NEP 2020 main details anchored in multilingualism, including the "3-language formula", the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, and the promotion of both classical and regional languages. The literature review focuses on the existing studies which are addressing the multilingual education's advantages and drawbacks. A part of the discussion and analysis chapter will focus on possible both positive and negative influence of the NEP 2020 on India's language diversity, education, and social coherence. The final section of the article re-emphasizes on the effectiveness of the implementation process and follow-up procedure to ensure that the multilingual approach under NEP 2020 will have successful outcomes.*



Keywords— *National Education Policy (NEP 2020), Multilingualism, Diversity, Culture and Language*

I. INTRODUCTION

Language, as it is the prevalent means via which tutorial and learning are done, is a fundamental aspect in the education. While multilingual countries are growing in number, the complexity of language policies is noteworthy and diverse countries like India where there are 22 scheduled languages and many dialects (Mohanty, 2006). The National Education Policy 2020, a version of the Union Cabinet of India that is dated July 29, 2020, argues that languages are

important in teaching and makes several recommendations around the way you teach, ancient languages, foreign languages, and Indian Sign Language (MHRD or Ministry of Human Resource and Development, 2020). The main idea of this article is the language function in the NEP 2020 and the examination of influence to the education system in India. India is a land, wherein many languages prevail, the 22 official languages and the regional ones. Multilingualism as a key factor in the National Education Policy (NEP)

promoted by the Government of India in 2020 is one of the key educational reform measures. This policy recognizes the importance of multilingualism in education and seeks to promote it through various measures (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). The article at hand will discuss the main points of the NEP 2020 regarding multilingualism and critically examine the existing studies related to this issue with the purpose of analysing the possible effect of NEP on the education and society of the country.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Multilingualism is one of such areas that influences the project of researchers and students all around the world. Researchers have demonstrated that teaching in one language enables a child to access optimal cognitive development, educational performance, and cultural expression (UNESCO, 2016). According to the researcher Cummins (2000), the knowledge of the mother language is crucial, as it facilitates the acquisition of the second languages, while fostering increased linguistic proficiency in general. While educational system in diverse settings such as India presents challenges, implementing multilingual education remains an indispensable necessity. Speaking of such a scenario in India, Agnihotri (2014) says about the discrimination of minority languages and privileging of English and some regional ones. Jhingarn (2015) even stresses on the importance of the professional development of teachers and equitable resources to support the instruction in the multilingual setting. Bilingual education has drawn massive argument in Indian education for a long time now. Some scholars sustain that mother tongue-based education entails many advantages even in the first years of children. UNESCO (1953) put a great deal of emphasize into the education given in the mother tongue in order to ensure that everyone has an equal and good education. As Jhingarn (2005) wondered, actively using the mother tongue in primary school academic lifts learning outcomes and lowers drop-outs. There was also line of sight to the part that English plays in national education which this was the subject of much debate for too. Graddol (2010) underlined that English in India is not only a powerful tool of global competitiveness, but it also become a door leading to social mobility. Annamalai (2004), movie highlighted the issues through which students from low-income family faced while they tried to get be educated in the English-language education system.

Along with that, the learning will also be imparted in classical languages and Indian Sign Language as well (NEP 2020). Pandey (2014) mentioned the idea that Sanskrit was the foundation of Indian education and that it was able to

help save the old culture and create the desired thinking. Randhawa (2019) pinpointed the place of Indian sign language in education as a measure of balance which will lead to the equalization of opportunities for deaf students.

III. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In addition to the implementation of the Many Languages One World policy NEP 2020 has introduced multiple methods that lead to multiple languages in schools. The "3-language formula" prescribes schools to impart lessons in three languages, eventually phasing them out with the mother tongue or regional language (05) as the medium of instruction. {Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020.} This method essentially is designed to help students to achieve fluency in their native tongue, English and even another Indian language. Classical and regional language is also given equal importance and they are to be incorporated in the curriculum and most suitable teaching materials should be developed accordingly (Freedom of Information, 2020). This realization that languages should not be lost and instead, deserves commendation and promotion, is a good move towards cultural conservation. Notwithstanding such, the putting into action of the multilingual application of NEP 2020 may be fraught with issues. Providing the availability of teachers in different languages and the adequate learning materials also requires substantial investment and strategizing (Jhingarn, 2015). Furthermore, the existing definitions connected to some languages and the pressure to comply with English for the development of economy and social status may cause the cavity of this policy (Agnihotri, 2014).

The idea of multilingualism as per the NEP 2020 has the potential to bring about the greater social integration as well as make everyone equal in the Indian classroom. Such measure is a way of valuing and giving opportunities to different languages and, at the same time, ensuring the continuation of cultural uniqueness as well as strengthening marginalized communities (UNESCO, 2016). Whereas, learning more languages can improve not only cognitive skills, but creativity, and job competitiveness in today's setting of a globalized world.

Medium of Instruction

The recent NEP_2020 has seen the use of the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction is emphasized especially in the initial years of education. It advices that this "medium of instruction is to be conducted in the mother tongue as much as possible, in particular, until the grade of 5, but preferably until the grade of 8 and onward" (MHRD, 2020, p. 13). This requirement is based on scientific study that indicates that language learn better through their native language (Jhingarn, 2005; UNESCO,

1953). However, the NEP also addresses the practical aspect of English as the global language and makes it an essential skill for learners which by the end of their high school should all be native speakers. As per the draft policy which it advocates, learning to be taught as a language subject start from Grade 3 and the medium to be used for science and mathematics from the secondary level would henceforth be in English (MHRD, 2020). The approach here is exclusively to use mother tongue-based teaching the language with the alongside the element of English language is a middle ground which focuses on both language diversity and competitiveness in global market.

Classical Languages

The fact is that NEP 2020 also offers special status to Aatmanirbhar Bhashas, which include Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia. Specifically, the committee keeps on the proposition of such languages as languages subjects in high school and university programs and the integration of their literature and their culture in the curriculum (MHRD, 2020). This policy does not restrict to the establishment of classical linguistics department in academic institutions rather it practically performs this work in the form of the scholarships of classical languages in universities. The classical languages promotion in the NEP is a way of the social admiration. the preservation of the nation's linguistic heritage and cultural heritage is the concern of many for some (Pandey, 2014). Nevertheless, some opponents have also (cited by Rai 2020:91) whether contemporary relevance of these languages is its aim. The success of the curriculum will be dependent upon the development of relevant textbooks, competent educators as well as a proper curriculum.

Foreign Languages

Although it is not elaborated in full detail the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 clearly sets that “every student in the country will learn at least two foreign languages, an international language of their choice will be offered as a language elective from the secondary stage” (MHRD, 2020, p. 16). As per the policy, foreign languages can be taught to kids as from Primary stage onwards and the new technological methods like online courses and student exchanges can be utilized to implement instruction. Language diversity affects the New Education Policy positively. It is a recognition of globalization that has been coming, and therefore students need to learn how to deal with people of different nationalities and cultures. But the execution of this policy will necessitate sizeable investments in continuous trainings for teachers, construction of curricula, and infrastructure development (Meganathan 2011).

Indian Sign Language (ISL)

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 identifies Indian Sign Language (ISL) as a full-fledged language and mentions the incorporation of ISL into the education system for children and higher education. It states that ISL should be integrated as a language of study at all levels and used as the medium of instructions for the deaf learners (MHRD, 2020). The policy applies as well to the building remains of ISL teaching materials and the education of ISL teachers. Putting ISL in the NEP has proved to be part of the advance that India has made so that the deaf students have equal chances for education access (Randhawa, 2019). This integration demands that policymakers, educators, and the deaf community collaborate to establish appropriate teaching methods and resources for a special education policy to be successful.

IV. CONCLUSION

Language, which is being given more and more importance in the National Education Policy 2020, is believed to be a means of knowledge, preserving cultural heritage, and building international competitiveness. The policy's guideline about media of instruction, classical languages, foreign languages, and Indian Sign Language makes use of research evidence and simultaneously celebrate India's linguistic variety and supply students with the language skills which are need of the hour today. Nevertheless, for these recommendations to be fruitful, it is necessary to handle several challenges, like teacher training, curriculum improvement, and resource allocation. In this regard, stakeholders such as policymakers, educators, and language communities will have to work together to make sure that the language policy promotes equity and inclusiveness no matter the ethnicity of the students. National Education Policy 2020 is a milestone in the journey of India in making multilingual environment a norm in education. The "3-language formula," which considers mother tongue as the medium of instruction and accepts classical and regional languages as equal languages are praiseworthy programs. Besides, the ability of a policy to achieve its goals is determined by its implementation strategies, which involve overcoming issues like teacher training, provision of resources and societal perspective on languages. Along with the NEP 2020 in India, it is necessary to address the effects and whether the multilingual approach works or not. Systematic checks such as stakeholder feedback, research studies as well as constant assessment can reveal improvement areas which can help to match the policy goals of promotion of linguistic diversity, educational outcomes improvement and social cohesion. The multi-lingual approach in the NEP 2020 holds immense potential for

education system and societal cause of India. Hence the policy that not only reflexes but also advocates for the diversity in languages can help lay down a foundation of a more inclusive, equitable and knowledge-based country.

Finally, it can be said that the Indian NEP 2020's linguistic policy can change the whole education system of the country through the diversification of linguistic resources, maintaining national cultural identity, and ensuring global competitiveness. The success of the plan would be depending on the good demand and implementation of its recommendations from all the stakeholders' commitment that every student in India could get access to quality language education.

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