

Language Policy under NEP: 2020 – A Critical Analysis

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Abstract —

Education is the backbone of a country. Education also plays vital role to upload national unity. Thus education policy always plays a congruent role in the spread of education in a country. Education policy acts as a basic requirement of a country. Any education policy sets on the analysis of the past. It deals with the need of the present days and also focuses on the possibilities of the future. Like the other countries, India also felt the need of a well-planned education policy to ensure all-round development of our society at large. The new education policy of India enlightens preservation as well as development of all Indian languages but the problem lays in the fact that India being a multilingual and multicultural country will select which particular language as a medium of instruction in the education system. NEP 2020 for the first time harps on introducing mother tongue as a medium of instruction at the primary level. All the relevant aspects of language issues are carefully integrated from paragraphs 4.11 to 4.22 very carefully under the heading ‘Multilingualism’ in NEP 2020. The inclusion of many vernacular languages in educational curriculum will definitely protect endangered languages in India. It will also help the students to be connected with the culture of the nation. Indirectly, this will help our students to increase qualitative creative skills. NEP 2020 has proposed to implement ‘Three-Language-Formula’ to promote multilingualism from the school level. The objective of NEP 2020 is to make the students proficient in different languages and also know the mother tongue to be respectful and knowledgeable about the ancient literature.

The **objective** of this study is to identify the **necessity** of new education policy (NEP 2020) and its **impact** on education system of our country for **holistic** development of the students from primary to higher education.

Key Words: Education system, Multilingualism, Multicultural, Holistic Development, Three-Language Formula.

Introduction:

Education assigns equitable values to human beings. A person can reach maximum potentialities of life through the medium of education. The life-expectations of a person can be achieved only through education and nothing else. Education shapes our life, moulds our character, builds our potentialities, preserves our talents, unfolds opportunities and uplifts us to a new realm of life. Education is everything to make an equitable society for the gross development of a nation. NEP 2020 highlights that the growth parameters of our nation can be set and met only through universal access to quality education.

World leaders signed Education 2020 Sustainable Development Agenda to offer education as a structured pathway and to ensure its accessibility to all for the sake of sustainable development and ensure peace. UNESCO is presently coordinating with the international community to meet the goal set for Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) by offering guidance, making partnership with different countries, providing close supervision and monitoring with Education 2030 Framework for Action. Keeping this in view, India in 2015 framed an agenda which actually wants and sets target to ensure inclusive education which will be able to provide equitable and quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030.”

Dr. K. Kasturirangan being the chairman of the committee proposed a roadmap by introducing ‘National Education Policy 2020’. The objective of this mission is to bring a drastic change in current education system and ensure quality education for lifelong opportunities. NEP 2020 has given more emphasis on language aspect in comparison to the previous two policies. This policy is more organized and has come put after 5 yrs of detailed research and preparation. This education policy is the first policy which has treated language in a holistic manner and has accepted the role and impact of language over everything. In NEP 2020, the word ‘language’ is used 206 times in 66 page documents in which 126 times as plural and 80 times as singular. The term ‘language’ being used as plural term signifies the association and inclusion of all Indian languages rather than giving priority on one particular language. NEP 2020 proposed four educational parameters – Student, Teacher, Curriculum and Infrastructural facilities.

India is a diverse land. Different parts of the country are having different food habits, customs and different dresses. India is also a land of different languages. Considering the deep rooted impact of language on society at large, it is also included in the Concurrent List and in the 8th Schedule of Indian Constitution to promote its progressive use and secure its enrichment process in independent India.

Objective of the Study:

This study aims to examine the proposals made by the expert committee for NEP 2020 and the initiatives that have been taken on behalf of the government to promote and preserve Indian Languages. It has been observed that for the first time mother tongue is made the medium of instruction at the primary level because the holistic development of students was the primary objective. Indian languages were included in the education system to save the ancient and endangered languages and also to invoke interest among Indian students about the ancient art and culture of the vast country. This is no doubt a great initiative to encourage our students to be connected with our enriched literature.

Importance of Language in school Curriculum:

Language is also viewed as a key tool in school curriculum for ages to come and plays very instrumental role in the gross development of a child. Language performs numerous functions not only in educational ground but only in our daily life.

According to Jean Piaget, a child during the Sensorimotor Period (0-2 Yrs) uses language as a weapon for emotional expression and from the Pre-Operational Period (2-7Yrs) Language is used as an instrument of thought and identity. Thus the importance of language is enormous both in school and higher education.

Researches show that a child’s cognitive development becomes superior if medium of instruction is given in the mother tongue. Children particularly at the foundational stage generates better understanding of the curriculum if lesson is imparted through mother tongue as they feel comfortable in the learning environment and enjoys to the brim.

Language as Power-tool:

In the NEP 2020 language issues are nicely depicted from paragraph 4.11 to 4.22 under the title 'Multilingualism and the power of language'. In the para 4.11, the need of mother tongue for understanding all the educational concepts meaningfully is manifested. There it is clearly mentioned that the medium of instruction for at least up to grade 5 should be given in mother tongue or home language or regional language but it will be preferable for up to grade 8.. This compliance covers both government and private schools. In the para 4.13 it is made clear that language will not be made compulsory for any state or be imposed on any state in any way. In para 4.14, it is stated that the textbooks will be written and made available in market in home language or regional language or in mother tongue and also be available in English language too. To promote and create linguistic skills among the children, especially to improve their oral and written skill, linguistic-fair can be organized in the schools where the students can get an opportunity to interact with the writers, poets etc and can develop love for books.

In NEP 2020 special emphasis is given on ancient Indian languages. This is for the first time, in the consolidated policy document of 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 following table shows the existence of mother tongue in India:

Sl No	No. of Mother tongue	Year of Census
1.	1652	1961
2	1369 (nationally rated)	2011

Table: 1 (Existence of Different Indian Mother tongue.)

This chart shows that India is a multi-lingual country and to take care of all these language is quite impossible. A report shows that in recent years where the total number of population in our country is increasing, the number of speakers of these major languages selected as mother tongue by many has gradually decreased in the last 40 years. So, it is a direct threat to these endangered languages. This new education policy has created a provision for the students to study these endangered languages. A proposal is initiated to update and disseminate these languages enlisted in 8th Schedule so that these languages can equally be treated with all other international languages.

The Role of Language Teacher:

Chapter 22 of the new document has recommended providing special training to the teachers particularly language teachers. This policy has clearly mentioned in the document that higher education institutions will establish language departments to arrange for training to language teachers. These teachers already trained will be engaged in taking classes across the country. As a consequence, the demand of the teachers for Indian Languages will go high in our country which will generate employment of teachers. Students will be apt in developing both oral and written communication skills. NEP 2020 focuses on preservation and development of all Indian endangered languages. Moreover, NEP 2020 is also recommending to make plan of actions to protect and nurture Indian classical languages particularly for higher education institutions in India.

Apart from this, special emphasis is given on the preparation of trained teachers who can well handle and meet the objective defined under the language aspect of NEP 2020. These specially trained language teachers will be groomed through continuous development policy to make them better in future. In spite of the importance of

mother tongue in language acquisition, the importance of English as a foreign language cannot be ignored. The emphasis on implementation of mother tongue as a medium of instruction is to eliminate fear and anxiety among the students and make the class more interesting and easier for the students.

Multilingualism:

The introduction of multilingualism in NEP 2020 has a far reaching impact on Indian education system. It will not only be able to build command on language among the students, but also help to develop love for Indian languages. 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 monolingualism 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.

Background of language Integration (NPE 1986 - NEP 2020):

Keeping this in view, Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommended the importance of regional languages in independent India and outlined 'Three-Language Formula' to be implemented at the secondary level of education. In 1986, NPE was introduced by Rajiv Gandhi and the same language policy was also recommended without any change for its deep impact on student-learning. NPE was modified in 1992 by P.V Narasimha Rao and in 2005 by Dr. Manmohan Singh and various unique features were included to gain maximized benefits and to promote national integration.

The Cabinet of India approved NEP 2020 on 29th July, 2020 that portrays the vision of our country's new education system. This education policy actually provides a composite framework of elementary as well as higher education including vocational training both urban and rural part of India as a whole.

Let us have a look at the timeline when Indian government took measures in different time line to reform Indian education system. This study has attempted to collect data from different timeline on major educational reforms in India:

Timeline of Indian Education Policy	Indian Prime Ministers	Education Policy Reforms in India
1968	Indira Gandhi	Promoted higher education in urban and the rural sector of India.
1986	Rajiv Gandhi	Introduced Adult education and the empowerment of minorities.
1992	PV Narosimha Rao	Introduced the system of common entrance examination for professional and technical education
2005	Manmohan Singh	Implemented common minimum program
2016	Narendra Modi	Addressed the gender discrimination, formation

		of the educational tribunal, the common curriculum for Science, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, and English
2020	Narendra Modi	Integrated Effective governance and leadership for higher education and also did vocational education, Internationalized professional education, Promoted Indian languages, arts, and culture, Catalyzed quality academic research in all fields by introducing the regulatory mechanism, Curbed commercialization of education.

Table: 2 (Different Time-line of Indian Educational Reforms.)

Targeted Timelines as per NEP 2020:

Few targets and timelines are set for this policy to be implemented universally all over the country. Let us have a look at the timeline provided in the table 3.

Year	Deadline
2040	The entire policy will be implemented all over the country.
2030	100% Enrolment from school level to second level.
2030	Preparing teachers for changed Assessment system
2030	Early childhood care and education will be integrated.
2025	Vocational training for at least 50% of the students.

Table 3 (Targets and Timelines of NEP 2020)

Language Policy under NEP 2020:

NEP 2020 has given importance in using mother tongue or regional language as a medium of instruction at least up to class V with a preference of its continuance till class 8 and beyond.

Three Language Formulas:

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.

As multilingualism plays an important role in NEP 2020, there will be a major responsibility both from the State and Central government to recruit language teachers in large numbers in all regional languages throughout the country, and particularly for all Schedule 8 languages.

Different states in India may enter bilateral agreements among themselves for hiring teachers in large numbers as suggested by the three-language formula to encourage and promote the study of Indian languages across the nation and develop national integrity.

Students having medium of instruction in the regional/home language will learn science and mathematics bilingually with English as a Foreign Language in Middle Level so that after 8th Grade, students can comfortably speak about different subjects both in their regional or home language and of course in English.

Indian Sign Language (ISL) will also be standardised shortly and the curriculum materials for the state and the nation as a whole will be developed, for the students who is having hearing impairment. Local sign languages will also be available wherever it will be possible.

Introduction of Mother-Tongue as a Medium of Expression:

Language represents culture, values, morality and mechanism of a society. A child coming from a particular society will imbibe its culture, values in the best way if the instruction is given in the mother tongue of the child. Eminent scholars and socio-scientists like Chomsky have asserted many times that language which is closest to the mother tongue of the child is the most useful language for education. Thus, if language represents a society, a culture, it is important for a child from that social background to get the basic elementary education in that language only. Here comes the importance of mother tongue or using mother tongue as a medium of expression at the foundational stage. NEP 2020 also advised several way outs to enhance the quality of teaching for the language teachers and has also suggested several training mechanism for teachers through online mode like SWAYAM/DIKSHA etc.

Here are also some issues which are doubtful and need to be noted in NEP 2020. Though the term 'mother tongue', 'Home-Language' is used synonymously in several places to describe 'Three-Language Policy', the difference between these two terms is not made clear. If a South Indian student residing at Northern part of India speaks South Indian language at home, Hindi in society and English at school, what language will be home language in that case is not clarified in this policy. Apart from there is no doubt that this language policy wants to promote multilingualism which is a boon for Indian society in present context and it also upholds the need of capacity building in Indian languages.

Translation and Interpretation:

NEP 2020 emphasizes on the need of translating various teaching learning materials in various Indian and foreign languages. Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation will be set up to translate the various materials in different languages for the benefit of the students and teachers. Apart from this, this policy has also recommended creating degrees or programmes on translation which is a big step indeed. However, it is to be noted that National Knowledge Commission (NKC) and National Translation Mission (NTM) are already in place since 2005 which may be merged into one institution as comprehensive translation initiative of all Indian Languages including English as foreign language.

Inclusion of Classical Language and Liberal Arts:

NEP 2020 strongly recommends the teaching of classical languages and literature of ancient India in school. It advocates the inclusion of Indian classical languages which satisfy 4-Point criterion as proposed by Ministry of Culture in the Rajya Sabha in February 2014.

To enhance the possibility of higher study and research on Indian classical languages i.e. Tamil (2004), Sanskrit (2005), Telugu (2008), Kannada (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Oriya (2014), it is proposed to build up connection among universities and institutions. It is also suggested in NEP 2020 to set up new institutions for Pali, Prakrit and Persian languages. It also proposed to collect and preserve manuscripts of the languages included in the 8th Schedule of Indian constitution. Art, culture and literature in NEP 2020 are focused in such a way that it will uplift the students love, creativity and academic dimension. When the draft of language resolution under NEP 2020 will come into force, it will open up a new opportunity for the language students and research scholars. Indian's culture and heritage will also be enlightened to the rest of the world.

Sanskrit Language as Mainstream Curriculum:

India's heritage language Sanskrit will be incorporated in mainstream curriculum. Greater flexibility and exposure will be given to Sanskrit for higher study in innovative and interesting ways so that this language can be strengthened in the multidisciplinary higher education system. This language is given special importance in NEP 2020 by Government of India. Sanskrit was thought of as a dead language and now it will revive as a rich regional language. Not only the teaching of this language will be made more interesting, it will be connected to various other subjects like yoga, mathematics, music, philosophy etc.

Endangered Indian Languages:

Language is the reflection of socio-cultural activities, historical as well as geo-political happenings. Language is the greatest repository of human interactions and is a flow of boundless possibilities of knowledge. NEP 2020 is the 1st document initiated by Indian government which identifies endangered language and issues a roadmap to save them from being extinct. In NEP 2020, the importance of language is discussed in para 22.4. Para 22.5 highlights the concern on the extinction of endangered languages. This policy has said that it is very unfortunate that Indian languages did not receive adequate attention and care for which our country has already lost 220 languages in the last 50 years. UNESCO has announced 197 Indian languages as 'Endangered'. Approximately 100 of 197 endangered languages are mainly from tribal locations of the North-East part of India. Not only are that, learning materials and dictionaries also not available of these Indian native languages. Appropriate measures should be taken to promote these endangered languages and dictionaries and learning resources should be made available so that students can continue studying these native Indian languages without any difficulties.

Relationship between Language and Culture:

Language and culture are interwoven and interconnected with each other and hence are inseparable. Language is the reflection of culture and culture is depicted and manifested by the strong nitty-gritty of language. Thus, language should be preserved and restored for ages after ages. If language is obsolete the culture of a country is lost. Language is the soul of a nation. Language is the honor of a country. Language is like a precious ornament which should be taken care of. Thus, language was given due importance in the education policy enacted in 1968 and also in 1986. NEP 1986 rolled out no improvement on NEP 1968 in respect of Triple-Language Formula only because of the importance of language as provide in Article 351 in Indian Constitution as a medium of expression for all aspects of composite culture of India. India being a multilingual country harps on the preservation and development of different languages. The composite culture and unity of the nation are reflected by different dialects. Therefore, compulsory teaching of languages is the most important part of the education policy. All the academicians and socio-scientists, educationists and thinkers think that education imparted by using mother tongue is the best tool for the cognitive development of a student This is a fact that almost all the developed countries use their own language as a medium of expression and on the contrary, all the underdeveloped countries opt foreign language as a medium of expression in the education system. In India, thus, the change was inevitable. In NEP 2020, the focus is given on learning native languages which is the pride of our country and develops love, respect and pride for our own language. From the nursery level through English language, western culture is injected into

our culture and we are accepting it as our own identity. This needs to be changed. Here lies the importance of language policy under NEP 2020. Hindi language which was given due importance in NEP 1986 as link language, is, basically a symbol of our nationality but in NEP 2020, Hindi is not given importance to democratize the language policy.

Bilingual Programmes for Higher Education:

The native Indian languages can also be used as a medium of instruction for higher education. A comprehensive teacher education (4 Years B.Ed) programme will be enforced to ensure the trained teachers to provide education bilingually.

Important Aspect of NEP 2020:

Most innovative aspects of NEP 2020 are:

- ✓ It features the holistic development of the children.
- ✓ It harps on the idea of concept learning and critical thinking.
- ✓ It gives flexibility in selecting multiple subjects in the course curriculum and integration of vocational education.
- ✓ It gives emphasis on value-based education and inculcation of moral and ethical learning.
- ✓ It focuses on query-based learning.
- ✓ It proposes a reformed Assessment system.
- ✓ It gives special emphasis on the training of teachers.

Criticism of Language Policy under NEP 2020:

- ✓ In the era of globalization, every human brain is tilted towards learning English. English is not only a foreign language but also a skill-set to excel in professional life. Emphasis on native Indian languages may overlook this burning fact.
- ✓ Students from a transferable job family background may find it difficult to adjust in a school other than his native state if medium of instruction is given in regional language or in home language.
- ✓ Study materials of various subjects may be really difficult to translate in native language particularly for the engineering curriculum.
- ✓ It will be really difficult to deliver lecture in native Indian language other than Hindi for various science and engineering subjects.
- ✓ In India where the students-teacher ratio is not satisfactory, bilateral agreements among the states to recruit teachers may not be fruitful.
- ✓ An engineering student who is interested to study engineering in regional language, may find it difficult to get a scope of higher study in abroad.
- ✓ From employment point of view, proficiency of subject knowledge in regional language may not be helpful.

Conclusion:

NEP 2020 focuses on the universalization of education from elementary level to secondary level with 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio within 2030. NEP 2020 is also targeting to bring back 2 crores of drop-outs into the mainstream education which is a huge target to achieve in a country like India. It designs an India-centric education policy which is targeting to transform our nation into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society by ensuring quality education for all. This policy targets to increase investment in education from 4.4% of Indian's GDP to 6% which is undoubtedly a huge step to implement for greater benefit of the country. In spite of few of its drawbacks, it is having greater flexibility and innovativeness which will definitely help the country as a whole to develop, prosper and build knowledge capital to lead the world.

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