

6. New Education Policy 2020 & Linguistic Current Situation

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Abstract

Language learning is the basic core of education. Because language is the medium of education. Providing primary education to children (at least to children) through mother tongue is a universally accepted principle. Many studies around the world have now proved that a child can absorb any knowledge, the theoretical part of it with proper understanding, more easily and effectively in his mother tongue than in a foreign language. But in the country of multilingual and multicultural India, where there are 22 official national languages as per the Constitution (as per the Eighth Schedule), it was not possible to decide on a single official national language for the entire country. Again, the English language spread all over the country due to the British rule for one and a half hundred years and the progress made by modern knowledge and science through it, could not be ignored. Hence, it is evident that the framers of the country settled the language question satisfactorily by deciding that English should be the contact language for the country along with Hindi, for the sake of national unity. But as it is important for the knowledge of the students to be imparted through the mother tongue, provision was made in Article 350A of the Constitution.

Introduction

In 1968, the first National Education Policy was implemented in India based on the recommendations of the Kothari Commission. In it, the trilingual language policy was first adopted keeping in mind the national integration, linguistic identity and multilingualism of the country. Simply put, a Hindi-speaking state had English, Hindi and a modern Indian language (which of course would not have been Sanskrit, possibly a southern state Dravidian language) and a non-Hindi-speaking state had English, Hindi and a state language. With the exception of Tamil Nadu, all states accepted the trilingual policy, but the Hindi-speaking states systematically defied the policy by adopting Sanskrit as their third language instead of the modern Indian language. Tamil Nadu clearly rejected the trilingual policy and adopted a bilingual policy of



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Tamil and English for its state. Because he was strongly opposed to the imposition of Hindi language through the trilingual policy. The central government did nothing before that. That is, although the National Education Policy had a trilingual principle, Tamil Nadu openly rejected it. While the Hindi speaking states bypassed it at their own convenience and adopted Sanskrit as their third language instead of the modern Indian language. But our Maharashtra, however, adopted this trilingual policy precisely and I believe that it was and is right. In the Second Education Policy of 1986, the trilingual policy was retained without any change. And in the third policy of the new 2020, it is still there, but there is a subtle change in it, it is insistence.

Key Provisions of Language in the New Education Policy

In the new National Education Policy under the heading 'Multilingualism and Language Compulsion' the language policy has been elaborated in sufficient detail in paragraphs 4.11 to 4.22. Let us first look briefly at its treatment. The major recommendations of this language policy are as follows-

- a. Trilingual policy of Kothari Commission has been retained in the new policy as well. But because of the strong reaction in Tamil Nadu, there is no separate clear mention of Hindi, but it has already been adopted by every state - with the exception of Tamil Nadu. Accordingly, the trilingual policy of the regional language of the state, Hindi and English, has been adopted more or less all over the country. Therefore, the trilingual language formula has been maintained in the new policy to preserve multilingual diversity and for national integration.
- b. The new policy emphasizes that the medium of education should be the mother tongue i.e. the state language at least up to the fifth standard and preferably up to the eighth standard. Beyond that, if possible, the local language should be taught there.
- c. Textbooks of all subjects including Science-Mathematics shall be made available to students in mother tongue/state language for easy understanding. Also teachers will be encouraged to use bilingual methods with bilingual teaching-learning materials. Thus students will be able to think and speak in both mother tongue and English.
- d. After developing the writing and reading skills of the students in the initial two years i.e. 1st and 2nd, writing and reading of other languages will be taught from 3rd standard onwards. A large number of teachers of all languages will be provided for this. Provision will be made for recruitment of teachers in large numbers from each other's

states to implement the trilingual formula. Also, various states will enter into bilateral agreements with each other to implement the trilingual formula across the country.

- e. Paragraph 9.3(a) recommends that there should be one large multidisciplinary university and college in or near every district, whose medium of instruction or programs shall be the vernacular Indian language.
- f. Sanskrit language will be available in all levels of school education, as well as an important and optional option in the Trilingual formula of higher education.
- g. Classical Indian languages, Pali, Persian and Prakrit along with Sanskrit and their materials will be available to the students through online modules in an experiential and innovative way.
- h. Foreign language at secondary level viz. Opportunities will also be provided Korean, Thai, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian.
- i. Indian Sign Language - Indian Sign Language will be standardized across the country.

Conclusion

A cursory glance at the language policy adopted by the Centre of Kasturirangan Samiti may seem appropriate for a multilingual and multicultural country like India. To a large extent this is true, but at first sight one cannot help but feel that the burden of learning several languages is being placed on students to preserve multilingualism. The presentation and acceptability of any policy depends on the details. Because 'Devil lies in details' now let us go into details and treat the new language policy on the basis of two criteria which are 1) suitable for students and national interest and 2) unreasonable and impractical as putting extra burden on students. A detailed interpretation of the same is necessary for clarity and direction and recommendations to the Government of Maharashtra for implementation.

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