



Assessing the Role of National Education Policy in Propelling the Educational Programmes of Minority Communities with Special Reference to Sindhi language in higher Education.

Dr. Jasbir Kaur Sodi

H. R. College of Commerce and Economics

ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) of India 2020 is a significant initiative that outlines the country's vision for education in the new millennium. Aligned with the United Nations Agenda 2030, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 4, the new policy aims to achieve universal access to quality education. Notably, the NEP emphasizes the importance of primary-level education in students' mother tongue or regional language, promoting inclusivity and cognitive development. However, the policy has been criticized for conflicting intentions. While it seeks to include historically disadvantaged and marginalized groups, it also appears to encourage aggressive privatization and divestment in public education, raising concerns about equity and accessibility. Striking a balance between promoting regional languages and ensuring equal access to quality education is crucial for successfully implementing the NEP 2020 and achieving its broader objectives in India. However, there seems to be a lack of critical discourse on the language policy and mother tongue education in the NEP 2020, particularly in the field of political studies. This research is an attempt to understand the policy influence on promotion of languages of minority communities in higher education and its adoption with special reference to Sindhi community. The qualitative research methodology helps in gaining perspective of the people from the advanced social, financial and cultural background on improving the designing, offering and acceptance of educational programs in Sindhi language in higher Education.

Introduction

The National Education Policy of India (NEP) 2020 is a groundbreaking policy representing the first education policy formulated in the new millennium. Since the previous NEP was developed in 1986 with some amendments in 1992, this new policy holds immense significance for India, a country that takes pride in its large youth population. The NEP 2020 serves as the foundation for shaping the education system, objectives, and the future of the young generation in the country. The government views the NEP as a transformative shift from focusing on "what to think" to fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills in the digital age. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expressed that this policy will pave the way for a "new India" by encouraging creativity and breaking away from conformity and group thinking. Emphasizing the significance of online and digital platforms in education, the new policy advocates for a multidisciplinary and forward-looking approach with a central focus on a "light but tight" regulatory framework under the National Higher Education Commission. In summary, the NEP 2020 is a significant step towards reshaping India's education landscape, encouraging independent thinking, and embracing technology to meet the challenges of the future. The NEP-2020 envisions an educational system deeply rooted in our culture and aims to transform India into a knowledge society that is equitable and dynamic. The significance of mother tongue in shaping the future of nations has always been crucial, and to recognize this importance, the United Nations declared International Mother Language Day on February 21st each year. Policymakers have appropriately emphasized the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction at the elementary level. The new education policy represents a departure from rote learning, where students were taught in a language other than their mother tongue, often leading to memorization without a proper understanding of the subject matter. By promoting the use of mother tongue in education, the policy seeks to foster better comprehension and expression. Although this presents challenges in implementation, particularly at the early stages of schooling, it offers benefits such as reduced dropout rates and a child-centric approach to education.

Conceptual Framework

Sindhi language, Indo-Aryan language spoken by about 23 million people in Pakistan, mostly living in the southeastern province of Sindh, where it has official status, and in the adjacent Las Bela district of Balochistan. In India, where Sindhi is one of the languages recognized by the constitution, there are some 2.5 million speakers, including both speakers of the Kachchhi dialect living in Kachchh, on the Pakistan frontier, and communities descended from Sindhi-speaking immigrants who had left Pakistan in 1947–48 and who are mostly settled in Gujarat and Maharashtra states. There are also smaller overseas groups in North America, the United Kingdom, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. The cultural homogeneity of Sindh that embraced both Hindu and Muslim speakers of Sindhi in the colonial period was severely disrupted by the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Most Hindu Sindhi

speakers migrated to India, where they form a minority scattered among speakers of other languages. After the partition for decades there was the option of primary education in Sindhi in some of the towns. But with the growing modernization and globalization impact that overstressed English as the acceptable language for better career orientation Sindhi language lost its influence on the young generations. With the new education policy that give wider emphasis on education in mother tongue there seems to be hope where sindhi language can be promoted and given status on par with other preferred languages. For this, education in a minority language is an important way to maintain the status and further the development of that minority language. Many languages have become endangered simply because the language is not transferred to the next generation. Next to demographics and other influences, there are many factors to take into account when studying the position of minority languages in education.

A minority language can be a unique minority language, but it can also be the main language of another country. This has implications for the amount of support a language can get from outside of the country where it is spoken as a minority language. There is also a noted difference in the official recognition of a language as a minority language. Being officially recognised as a minority language mostly implies that a language can claim certain rights, which are laid down in the form of laws (also concerning education) and are supported by the nation-state's government. Other issues are the availability of minority language teachers and teaching material in the minority language. Overall, the way in which a language is kept 'alive' amongst its speakers (are they – and especially young people - proud of their language? Do they think it is necessary to keep the language alive?) is a very important factor to consider. The minorities can be defined as "A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non- dominant position, whose members - being nationals of the State - possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language." (Capotorti, 1979, par. 586).

When it comes to maintaining languages, vitality is of key importance. Scholars usually distinguish nine criteria to measure whether a language is vital and not threatened with extinction. These nine indicators are part of a broader theoretical framework for language vitality and indicate what is necessary to maintain the language. These are the following: absolute numbers of speakers, intergenerational language

transmission, community members attitudes towards their own language, shifts in domains of language use, governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies (including official status and use), type and quality of documentation, response to new domains and media, availability of materials for language education and literacy, and finally the proportion of speakers within the total population (UNESCO, 2003). The Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (Moseley, 2010) is one of UNESCO's initiatives and shows on a world map which languages are threatened with extinction. The five levels of threat are measured on the basis of the nine criteria illustrated in Figure 1. For the 'lightest' category of threat, the term 'vulnerable' is used. Vulnerability develops when most children still speak the language, but when the use of the language is "restricted to certain domains". The term 'definitely endangered' is used when "children no longer learn the language as their mother tongue in the home". The term 'severely endangered' is used when the "language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves". Critically endangered are the languages where "the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently" (p. 11-12). Same view believes that a language that has not been spoken since 1950 is labeled with the term 'extinct'. Another factor that plays a crucial role in the success of minority languages, in education as well as in other areas, is language planning. Language planning is closely related to institutional support and support from the nation- state.

Minority language educational models can be monolingual, bilingual or trilingual. In the case of the latter, the national language is used together with the regional or minority language in addition to a third foreign language (often English). Instruction methods also differ, but many experts refer to 'immersion education' as a best practice for their region. Immersion teaching is a method in which students are taught in the second language, so the second language is used as a medium of instruction. Immersion education can take place in different formats, from complete immersion to partial immersion. In most recent years, an increasing amount of experiments have taken place with so-called 'translanguaging' methods. Translanguaging is a dynamic process in which multilingual language students can fluidly use multiple languages in the classroom (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Some best practices are found in this report's case studies, but one needs to note that a model is never directly applicable to other regions. What is important is that the idea behind the applied educational model works well for a specific region or situation, a similar idea can work well in other regions as well, when applied to the specific situation of the minority or regional language in that region.

The educational model, the time that is dedicated to the subject and the teaching method all differ per region. For some regions, a multilingual educational model in secondary education is a relatively challenging task. However it is impossible to develop tailor-made approaches that are applicable for all cases. It is important to note that it works well to have a continuous learning line from primary school up to secondary school and even vocational education. This means that pupils start following a specific model as early as pre-school which is then continued in primary school and secondary school or even beyond. Almost all regions encounter problems with the education programmes they offer in vocational or higher education. At the same time, there is an identified need for vocational educational students in specific sectors.

Research Design & Methodology

The present research uses qualitative approach and exploratory design. The survey was conducted using the interview schedule from the Sindhi business community entrepreneurs, sindhi academicians and the successful sindhis designated at higher level positions in the corporate in Mumbai. The area of research was limited to the sindhis of Mumbai and Ahmedabad due to limitation of reach. The sample included 30 respondents and convenience sampling was used. The interviews focused on understanding the problem in promotion of the sindhi language among the younger generations and what strategies can be adopted to popularize the language to make it acceptable to the youth in education and also strategic efforts to save it from being extinct in the long run.

Analysis & Interpretation & Findings

The interview covered the questions on problems faced by the institutions in conducting the programs in mother tongue and how they can be improved. The research findings helped gained insights into the challenges and possible ways were suggested by the respondents. The attitude of youth from minority communities towards educational programs in their mother tongue varied widely. Some appreciate the preservation of their cultural identity and find it beneficial for learning, while others might prioritize access to a broader range of opportunities and opt for education in a more widely spoken language. It's important to consider individual preferences and local contexts when assessing attitudes towards such programs. Teaching education programs in Sindhi language can face several challenges like lack of Resources: Insufficient quality textbooks, teaching materials, and digital resources in Sindhi language can hinder effective instruction. Teachers may lack adequate training in teaching Sindhi as a subject, including appropriate language teaching methodologies and strategies. Developing a comprehensive and well-structured curriculum that meets educational standards while effectively teaching subjects

in Sindhi can be a complex task. Students and teachers alike may struggle with proper proficiency in written and spoken Sindhi, affecting the quality of instruction. Certain technical or specialized terms may not have direct equivalents in Sindhi, making it challenging to teach certain subjects comprehensively. Some parents may prioritize education in a more widely spoken language for better job prospects, leading to reduced interest and enrollment in Sindhi language programs. The lack of standardized Sindhi language assessments and examinations can affect the evaluation of students' language skills. Limited access to technology and the internet in certain areas may hinder the implementation of technology-based language instruction. The curriculum and teaching materials may not adequately reflect the local culture, history, and context, leading to disinterest among students.

Dialectal variations within Sindhi can pose challenges in creating a unified language curriculum that caters to all learners. Economic disparities may affect access to quality education, including Sindhi language instruction, in certain communities. Inconsistent or inadequate government policies and funding for Sindhi language education can limit its growth and development. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from educators, policymakers, communities, and language experts to ensure that teaching education programs in Sindhi language are effective, relevant, and inclusive.

The availability of educational programs in Sindhi language are influenced by various factors like the prevalence and usage of the language. Since the language is spoken by a smaller population or has limited use in educational, professional, or administrative settings, there may be fewer resources dedicated to creating educational programs in that language. Additionally, funding, government policies, and curriculum decisions play a role. Languages with strong institutional support and recognition are more likely to have educational programs developed in them. If Sindhi is not prioritized within the education system, it could lead to a lack of educational resources in that language. Efforts are required to increase the availability of educational programs in Sindhi that could involve advocating for its inclusion in curricula, promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, and encouraging the creation of resources to support learning in that language.

Improving Sindhi language programs in education requires a multi-faceted approach involving various stakeholders. Certain ways that can help enhance Sindhi language education can be raising awareness about the importance of preserving and promoting the Sindhi language among educators, parents, policymakers, and the community. Highlight the cultural and historical significance of Sindhi to garner support.

Developing curriculum can be helpful. Working with education authorities to integrate Sindhi language courses and materials into the curriculum at different levels of education that can ensure the curriculum is relevant, engaging, and aligned with educational standards. Providing training and professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills in teaching Sindhi language effectively. This can include language teaching methodologies, cultural sensitivity, and use of technology. Developing high-quality textbooks, reading materials, and digital resources in Sindhi. These resources should cater to various age groups and learning levels, making the language learning process engaging and interactive. Leveraging technology to make Sindhi language learning more accessible. Creating educational apps, online courses, and interactive platforms that facilitate language acquisition and practice. There is a need to integrate aspects of Sindhi culture, history, and traditions into the language curriculum. This can foster a deeper connection with the language and encourage its preservation. Involving the Sindhi community in the development and promotion of language programs. Collaborate with cultural organizations, local leaders, and community members to create a supportive ecosystem for language education. People from power positions can advocate for government policies that prioritize and support Sindhi language education. This may include allocating resources, establishing language institutes, and implementing language preservation initiatives. Collaboration with universities, research institutions, and language experts to develop innovative teaching methodologies and conduct research on effective language instruction. Language festivals, competitions, and events that celebrate Sindhi language and culture. These activities can generate interest and enthusiasm among students and the community. Engaging parents in their children's language learning journey. Organize workshops, seminars, and parent-teacher interactions to emphasize the importance of Sindhi language education.

Conclusions & Recommendations

NEP can play important role in promoting and preserving the modern Indian Languages only if it supports the efforts of the Propelling the minority languages and encourage learner to take up programs in higher education. It can be concluded that teaching material for teaching in the minority language forms a general challenge shared by all cases. Minorities that have a kin-state can often depend on teaching material from the kin-state, but it must also be noted that the development of a minority language's own teaching material (instead of importing it or translating it from the majority language) can be beneficial for a minority, because such material can convey or incorporate the region-specific cultural values and cultural embeddedness that are often present in teaching material. Another overall challenge is the quality and qualification of teachers. Regions that demand that the teaching of the minority language should be done through mother tongue speakers especially suffer from a deficit of qualified teachers that can come

up and take over the programs offered to teach. Further there is also the demand problem where the vocational or masters programs offered in the mother tongue of minorities have less demand or the programs face discontinuation due to its weak acceptance. This low demand is partly due to the lack of encouragement from colleges that offer vocational education and hence it becomes apparent to encourage proficiency in the minority language by the businesses and entrepreneurs of that minority for the job seekers.

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