

Language Perspective in National Policy on Education 2020 and Employment Policy of the Indian Government

Deepa Kukreti¹

¹Research Scholar, Rabindranath Tagore University, Bhopal.

Abstract

The present system of education in India finds its roots into the colonial times. The structure of education has largely been influenced by the English system which was created with a purpose of developing individuals who could serve the British Government. The inheritance of the system also inherited the English language which became an inseparable part of the education system in India henceforth. The three-language system which has been functional ever since the independence of India recognizes teaching of English as a compulsory part of the language teaching. The National Education Policy 2020 had been a long-awaited document. The present paper discusses the key-points made on the language teaching learning strategy in the NEP, 2020. The study has taken an analysis of requirement of English in the teaching learning system and has evaluated the NEP, 2020 document with a special concern to understand English language teaching discussion and suggestions. The National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes on cultivating the indigenous languages of the country and enriching multilingualism. Contrasting to this are the research data prompting towards the essential requirement of English for employability. The National Education Policy apparently fails to adequately address the need of the connecting language that can yield better employable youth.

Keywords: NPE-2020, Language policy, Three language formula, English.

Introduction

Education is enlisted as one of the basic human rights of every individual. The education system must contribute to thinking patterns development (Patel, 2019). For any education to be imparted, there must be a medium of instructions through which the concepts, whether local or universal, shall be taught to the learners. Education policies are addressed considering the socio-cultural limelight with a purpose to identify for the employment scenario which directly concerns the economic growth. Ever since the independence of India, three education policies have been brought up. The present research discusses the National

Education Policies with respect to their insight on the use of language for education. The paper is based on the insightful study of the three education policies of 1968, 1986, and 2020 respectively in this connection and research literature available on the present trends in the employment market.

Education and language go hand in hand. Language and Culture go hand in hand. India being a land of versatile cultural richness has had several dialects and languages. The historical evidences are necessary to be evaluated before assessing the developments promised in the National Education Policy 2020. The National Employment Policy recognizes a clear-cut transition from farm sector to the non-farm sector, which in-turn sets up a natural demand for the education and development of skills in non-farm sector endeavors. While the National Education Policy does talk about development of vocational courses to be encouraged in the local languages, what remains a subject of concern is the availability of industry pertaining to that skill set in the given area only. NITI Aayog states on its website that “The youth presently make up close to 35% of the population and the Indian workforce is expected to increase to approximately 600 million by the year 2022 from the current estimated 473 million” (Sanghi, 2020).

The present system of education was borrowed from the British colonial system of education and has ever since absorbed English language as a necessity despite all contentions.

Background of Medium of Education in India

Macaulay’s Minutes: Lord Macaulay’s minutes of February, 1835 are one of the oldest documents that refer to the modern education system adopted for the Indians in the British dominion. Lord Macaulay has made these recommendations in the report of the Public Instructions Committee of the then Great Britain. One of the important questions posed before the committee was that of the medium of education where by Macaulay states,

“We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue. We must teach them some foreign language.” (Macaulay, 1835).

And in continuation of the same argument he stated;

“In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the East.” And therefore, “...the English tongue is that which would be the most useful to our native subjects.”...(Macaulay, 1835).

This marks the formal beginning of induction of English in the Education system to be adopted in India henceforth. The recommendations made in the Macaulay’s minutes were implemented until Lord Dalhousie came to India and found the education system for the masses in a rather dilapidated state. During his time however, Wood’s Despatch came to India in 1857 and was immediately implemented. Sir Charles Wood, who was the President

of the Board of Control of the East India Company, brought in substantial changes in the way education was to be forwarded to the Indian masses. The Despatch emphasized on education for the masses and education in vernacular medium was encouraged. Books of English were also translated in Sanskrit, Persian, and Arabic. The private institutions who would take interest in developing independent institutions were to be promoted through Government grants. This was for the first time that three universities were developed in India at modern day Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai respectively with three medical colleges in each of these places. Wood's despatch was a landmark in bringing mass education in the limelight and in providing a push to the existing system. It is important to realize that by 1857, though vernacular languages were recognized in the learning system, yet the higher education was delivered only in English. The British Government at the same time was not very keen on spending on the education of Indian population. Further to this, University Education Commission (1948-49) and Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) are important in restructuring the education system in India after independence.

Language and National Education Policies

National Education Policy 1968- The policy laid emphasis on the development of Indian languages and culture where it was accepted that the primary and secondary education were already practicing the use of regional languages as media for education. It was suggested that the higher education also lays emphasis on use of regional languages wherever possible (MHRD).

National Education Policy 1986- It adhered to the previously laid policy of 1968 and did not recommend any changes pertaining to the teaching of language.

National Education Policy 2020- After the NPE 1968, Chapter 22 of NEP 2020 under the heading, promotion of Language, Art and Culture, talks elaborately on education and languages. There are 20 items discussed under the chapter. For the purpose of discussion on language education in India and various facets of the same, only those items have been discussed from the NEP 2020 which are relevant to it. It is important to understand that having discussed the language in education alongside the art and culture in the same chapter itself creates a perspective towards the treatment of the word "language" in education as a continuum of culture *per se*. It must be realized here that, learning a language and learning in a language are two different arguments that need to be addressed when dealing with education at various levels. While the first language theorists have iterated the methods of acquisition of first language which is received from the immediate environment of the learner, it is usually dependent on the cultural richness of the environment. It is in this case that we can assert that art, language, and culture go hand in hand.

The item 2 of the chapter asserts on the association of identity and self-esteem with such aspects as culture and language and at the same time allowing insight to appreciation of other cultures and languages. The clause 4 states:

“...Different languages ‘see’ the world differently, and the structure of a language, therefore, determines a native speaker’s perception of experience.”

And recognizes that culture is “encased “in our languages.

The policy quotes a figure of UNESCO which states that 197 languages in India are endangered, and that we have already lost 220 languages in past 50 years. There are 22 languages enlisted in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India, whereby a lot of emphasis is being laid on teaching learning processes to be integrated with these languages.

The policy expresses a clear concern on the availability of skilled language teachers in India. It emphasizes teaching methods beyond the Grammar and vocabulary-based methods and maintains the use of three language formula throughout all levels of school in order to promote multilingualism. The policy is however suggestive in nature on the use of local language for teaching focusing on developing a team of teachers that is equipped to address the objective. Emphasis has been laid on use of mother tongue/local language as a medium of instructions for teaching at various levels and increasing bilingualism. The policy suggests that even the private higher education institutions will be incentivized for cultivating bilingualism and promoting the use of local languages. A crucial point worth mentioning is that the policy states, “Proficiency in Indian languages will be included as part of qualification parameters for employment opportunities” (MHRD, 2020).

Education and Employability

Education per se does not have a primary responsibility towards employability, however, the employability definitely has its roots in education of an individual. Therefore, education and employment are interconnected. Having understood the same, it is realized that the education system must find a connecting language which ensures the employability of the youth irrespective of the place of education.

Engineering graduates attempt some standardised tests for placement in premium companies. One such test is AMCAT conducted by Aspiring Minds. A research conducted by the Aspiring Minds on about 30000 engineering graduates in the year 2015 reveals that only 2.9% engineers have spoken English skills suitable for high end jobs and consultancy. Only 6.8% engineers show ability to speak and respond in English correctly (Aspiringminds, 2015).

The NPE-2020 lays emphasis on multilingualism in an ideal manner but at the same time fails to consider the unique penetration of English all across the country and at various strata in education system. While most professional education courses at higher education are in English; medical sciences, engineering sciences, legal studies, and management studies, it would be a subject of concern on translating these books in vernacular medium. Three languages formula ensures that all children study English as at least one of the three

languages, which automatically leads us to believe that the English language acquiring population is higher compared to the population of learners acquiring other vernacular language skills. The present policy does not detail on the *modus operandi* of applying effective English language teaching.

Conclusion

The discussion provides an insight into the development of education system in India which from its inception was centred towards employment. The medium of education was discussed right from the time of Lord Macaulay's initial reforms to Indian education system. The first education policy of 1968 addressed the subject in a broad spectrum accommodating the cultural versatility in India. Eventually as the country's needs have evolved with the dynamics of economic and technological changes affecting the overall demographics, the serious debate on medium of education is still pending. Moreover, having understood that English shall be one of the three languages in education, the teachers training and availability of subject matter for other subjects to be taught in the curriculum in English should be given a serious thought. It can very well be understood that English is one of the core skills required for employment and this aspect has not been recognized in the National Education Policy 2020.

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