

## **NEP 2020: Understanding Language as a Cornerstone of India's Educational Transformation**

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### **Abstract:**

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) places significant emphasis on language, recognizing its fundamental role in cognitive development, cultural preservation, and equitable access to education in India's multilingual context. This research paper delves into the multifaceted approach of NEP 2020 towards language, examining its key recommendations concerning the medium of instruction, the promotion of Indian languages, and the importance of multilingualism. It analyzes the policy's intent to leverage the mother tongue/local language as the primary medium of instruction in the foundational years and strategies for strengthening Indian languages across all levels of education. This study will explore the potential benefits of NEP 2020 language policy, including improved learning outcomes, enhanced conceptual understanding, and its preservation of India's rich linguistic diversity. It will examine the pedagogical rationale behind early education in the mother tongue and the potential for multilingualism to foster cognitive flexibility and cross-cultural understanding. Furthermore, the research will broadly analyse the challenges associated with implementing these language-related provisions, such as the availability of quality multilingual learning materials and the preparedness of teachers to teach in multiple languages.

**Keywords** - NEP 2020, Multilingualism, Transformation, language, Mother tongue, Education.

### **Introduction:**

India is the land of remarkable linguistic diversity and long-recognized significance of language in shaping its social, cultural, and educational fabric. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), unveiled as a guiding framework for the 21st century, places unprecedented emphasis on language as a fundamental aspect of educational reform. Recognizing that language is not merely a medium of instruction but also an intrinsic part of identity, cognition, and cultural heritage, NEP 2020 articulates a vision where language plays a central role in fostering holistic development and ensuring equitable access to quality education for all learners. The policy document outlines its key linguistic guidelines and recommendations, highlighting the critical role of mother tongue or local languages in teaching, particularly

during the initial school years, promoting multilingualism and the three-language formula, and advocating for the revitalization and strengthening of all Indian languages. By analyzing these provisions, elucidate the policy's underlying philosophy regarding language and its potential to reshape the educational landscape of India. Furthermore, it seeks to identify the anticipated benefits, potential challenges, and crucial considerations for the effective implementation of these language-related reforms. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how NEP 2020 envisions language as a cornerstone for building a more inclusive, effective, and culturally rooted education system that caters to the diverse linguistic realities of India.

### **Methodology:**

The goal of this research is to provide a thorough examination of the topic, which is supported by current literature. Using a qualitative research design, this study conducts a subjective exploration of the research questions through the analysis of non-numerical factors. The study critically assesses evidence based on archival data gathered from readily available records held by various governmental and non-governmental bodies.

### **Objectives of the study:**

1. To know the role of NEP 2020
2. To understand importance of mother language in learning.
3. To study the necessity of teacher training.

National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) positions and emphasizes language as a crucial element in its vision for transforming India's education system. It requires a thorough examination of the policy document to identify the various roles and functions attributed to language within the proposed educational reforms.

### **Grounds of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:**

The National Education Policy of 2020 represents a pivotal development in India's educational framework, focusing on a comprehensive reform of the existing system to align with the demands and challenges of the modern age. Before the implementation of NEP 2020, India's education policy had experienced very few updates since the inception of the National Policy on Education in 1986, which was later revised in 1992. This lengthy period without substantial reforms resulted in notable deficiencies within the education sector, including curriculum that had grown out-dated, reliance on memorization techniques for learning, and a lack of focus on skills training along with comprehensive learning outcomes. The Union Cabinet officially approved NEP 2020 on July 29, 2020, with the intention of confronting these challenges and

initiating a transformative shift in the educational sphere of India. The policy is driven by the commitment to ensure fair access to high-quality education for every individual, regardless of their economic status, geographic setting, or language differences. It aims to create an educational environment that encourages innovation, analytical reasoning, and problem-solving capabilities, equipping learners to succeed in a swiftly evolving global landscape. The main elements of NEP 2020 encompass the rollout of a revised curriculum framework for schools, the creation of multidisciplinary educational establishments, and the incorporation of technological advancements to improve educational outcomes. A noteworthy aspect of the policy is its emphasis on using the mother tongue or local languages as the primary language of instruction during the formative years of education, acknowledging its significance in enhancing communication, mental growth, and cultural continuity.

### **Cognitive Advantages of Native Language Education:**

Investigations within cognitive psychology and psycholinguistics have repeatedly highlighted the cognitive benefits associated with education in one's native tongue or a well-known language. A crucial element is the idea of linguistic relativity, which posits that language influences thought processes and cognition, affecting how individuals perceive and understand their surroundings.

When learners study in their native language, they find it simpler to comprehend intricate ideas, make connections between new information and what they already know, and utilize advanced thinking abilities such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. This occurs because mastery of a language significantly influences cognitive processing, with higher fluency in the instruction language being linked to better academic achievement across various subjects. Furthermore, native language education boosts metalinguistic awareness, which is vital for developing reading and writing skills and acquiring additional languages. By establishing a solid base in their native language, learners are more prepared to transfer these language abilities to other tongues, including English, and become skilled multilingual communicators. Additionally, studies indicate that education in one's mother tongue creates a supportive socio-affective atmosphere that favours learning, diminishing anxiety while enhancing motivation and self-confidence among learners. When students feel acknowledged and valued for their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, they are more inclined to engage actively in educational activities, work collaboratively with peers, and take responsibility for their educational paths.

### **Language Policy in Education:**



NEP 2020: The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 brings a significant change in language guidelines, highlighting the crucial role of one's native or regional language as the primary language of instruction during the initial stages of education. This policy is based on evidence from research that points to the cognitive, language, and socio-cultural benefits of education conducted in a child's first language. The language strategy under NEP 2020 aspires to enhance multilingual capabilities and celebrate linguistic variety, while also ensuring that all students, irrespective of their language backgrounds, have fair access to high-quality education. It acknowledges that early learning in one's mother tongue lays a robust groundwork for developing literacy and mathematical abilities, eases the process of learning additional languages, and cultivates a sense of identity and pride among students. Additionally, NEP 2020 promotes adaptability and choices in language education, permitting students to progressively incorporate other languages as they advance in their educational journey. This method recognizes the linguistic diversity inherent in Indian culture and aims to meet varying linguistic needs and goals. Furthermore, NEP 2020 underscores the necessity for extensive language development initiatives that extend beyond simple language teaching to include language enhancement, support for literacy, and cultural integration. It advocates for merging language learning with other educational subjects to encourage cross-disciplinary education and overall growth.

#### **Value of Language in Education:**

Language serves a critical function in shaping educational journeys and achievements. It acts not only as a channel for communication but also as an instrument for mental growth, social engagement, and cultural representation. Studies show that children grasp concepts most efficiently when taught in their native language or a language they know well, as this enhances understanding, involvement, and memory of information. So we can say that , language is profoundly linked to individual identity and cultural heritage. In numerous communities, the native language is not just a communication method but a representation of pride and community. By advocating for the inclusion of native languages in educational settings, decision-makers can aid in the preservation of linguistic variety and boost a sense of cultural belonging among learners. Nonetheless, even with the recognized advantages of education centred on the mother tongue, there has historically been a tendency in India to favour English or other major languages in educational environments, especially in urban and prestigious schools. This preference for certain languages has side-lined local languages and led to a

decline in linguistic variety, creating difficulties for students who speak non-dominant languages.

- **Training of the Teacher:** Establishing professional growth opportunities is crucial for equipping teachers with the knowledge, skills, and materials needed for effective mother tongue-based teaching, with training covering language teaching methods, cultural understanding, and methods for diverse learners.
- **Language as a Cornerstone for Learning:** Explore how the NEP 2020 positions language as the essential groundwork upon which all other education is built, including its focus on nurturing early linguistic abilities, establishing foundational literacy, and the integral part language plays in cognitive processes and assimilating knowledge throughout the curriculum.
- **Language as a Root of Instruction:** Analyse the policy's stance on which language should be used for instruction at different points in education, specifically pushing towards mother tongue/local language in the foundational years (from class 5 to class 8), and go through the rationale provided, count leading to improved knowledge, more active commitment, and decreased learning breaks.
- **Language and Multilingualism:** Examine how the NEP 2020 champions multilingualism, positioning it as both an advantage for cognitive skills and an asset for the country. This involves analysing the "three-language formula," its goals, and the flexibility offered in its application, alongside considering the policy's view on the positive impacts of knowing multiple languages on fostering cultural understanding, promoting national unity and cognitive development of students.
- **Language and Cultural Estate:** Explore how the NEP 2020 views the relationship between language and India's rich cultural traditions, emphasizing the need to protect and support all Indian languages. Analyse the policy's proposals for improving the teaching and learning of classical languages, advocating for Indian knowledge systems through Indian languages, and encouraging pride in linguistic variety.
- **Language and Equity & Inclusion:** Investigate how NEP 2020 tackles the part language plays in guaranteeing fair access to good education for all students, especially those from varied linguistic origins. Examine the measures for assisting learners whose home language is unlike the teaching language and the stress placed on overcoming language obstacles to foster inclusion.

- **Language and Teacher Education:** Investigate how the NEP 2020 plans for equipping teachers to successfully navigate multilingual classroom environments and apply the policy's language principles, considering the potential inclusion of focus areas such as language mastery, teaching approaches for diverse linguistic settings, and ongoing teacher development.
- **Language and Assessment:** Investigate whether and how the NEP 2020 suggests modifications in evaluation methods to correspond with its language policy, guaranteeing equitable and precise assessment of learning for students from varied linguistic origins
- **Language in Vocational Training:** Consider whether and how the NEP 2020 discusses the function of language in vocational education and skill enhancement, ensuring that students can access training and materials in languages they comprehend.

### **Conclusion:**

NEP 2020's emphasis on language represents a paradigm shift with the potential to fundamentally reshape Indian education. By recognizing the cognitive, cultural, and equitable significance of language, the policy lays the foundation for a more inclusive, engaging, and relevant learning experience for all students. Nevertheless, achieving effective execution of policies once they are formulated is often challenging. Overcoming these hurdles requires a concerted and collaborative effort from all stakeholders, underpinned by significant investment, strategic planning, and a deep commitment to harnessing India's linguistic diversity as a powerful asset for educational transformation. Understanding and prioritizing the language dimension of NEP 2020 is not merely about linguistic preference; it is about unlocking the full potential of every Indian learner and building a truly empowered and culturally vibrant nation. The "new hope" embodied in NEP 2020's language policy can only be realized through meticulous planning, dedicated execution, and a shared vision for a linguistically rich and equitable educational future for India.

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