



# **Challenges and Outcomes of Implementing Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction in India's National Education Policy 2020**

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Speaking at an event to mark the third anniversary of NEP, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi pitched for education in the mother tongue. He said that through NEP, the country has started leaving behind the inferiority complex generated after portraying the country's rich languages as backward. He said India has a variety of languages but they were presented as a sign of backwardness and those who could not converse in English were neglected and their talents were not recognized. The Prime minister said many developed nations of the world have an edge owing to their local language so education in mother tongue will do justice to the young students.

## Introduction:

The vision of NEP 2020 is to reshape and transform the education system and structure in the country. It aims at universalisation of education from pre-school to secondary level. The NEP replaced the existing framework that will focus on the elementary to a higher level of education in india.The focus will be on developing good,thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals. It is anticipated that the implementation of NEP2020 would bring about substantial changes to the educational ecosystem to allow a holistic learning experience for the all round holistic development of students.

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant shift in the country's approach to education by emphasizing the use of mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction in schools. This policy aims to create a more inclusive and culturally sensitive education system that recognizes the linguistic diversity of the nation. While this approach offers promising benefits, its successful implementation faces various challenges. This article tries to find the challenges that may be faced during the implementation of mother tongue-based instruction and explores the potential outcomes and benefits that can be derived from this approach. Language can be a challenge. One of the principles of NEP2020 is "promoting multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning." This objective is given in the policy to address some of the major problems currently faced by higher education institutions, namely limited access in socioeconomic and disadvantaged areas, with few higher institutions teaching in local language. The recommendations of NEP 2020 advocating the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction is not new even the Kothari commission on education had also emphasized on the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction in schools. Section 29 (f) of chapter V under the right to education act, 2009 unquestionably states that the "medium of instructions shall, as far as practicable, be in child's mother tongue".

## Challenges in Implementing Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction:

### Linguistic Diversity in India:

India has a rich tapestry of languages and cultures. To fully embrace this aspect, the policy could consider striking a balance between promoting language diversity and the standard national curriculum. By doing so NEP can create a holistic and enriched educational experience for all students. The NCF2023 also emphasizes the three language formula of R1, R2

and R3 with distinct literacy and proficiency milestones for each language, emphasizing holistic language development and appreciation of India's literary heritage. The policy recognizes the importance of multilingualism in promoting cognitive development and inclusive culture. This also addresses disparities in education by focusing on marginalized communities and also helping students with disabilities'.

NEP 2020 is focusing to provide education in mother tongue only. Students can learn in other languages also, but the primary education will cover 8 years of students in foundational and preparing stage will be only provided in mother tongue so that the child feels at liberty to express in his mother tongue.

India boasts a rich bank of local languages with numerous regional languages spoken across different states and communities. However, this diversity poses a challenge in ensuring that an adequate number of teachers proficient in various mother tongues are available. In regions with smaller linguistic communities, finding teachers with the necessary language skills can be particularly challenging. The census of 2011 identified 270 mother tongues.

#### Availability of Proficient Teachers:

The successful implementation of mother tongue-based instruction is based on the availability of teachers who possess a high level of proficiency in regional languages. However, there is often a shortage of qualified teachers with the required language skills, which can impede the effective delivery of education in the mother tongue. For multilingual education to be successful it has to be accompanied by pedagogical changes and trained teachers who can deal with several languages in the classroom and teach the child in his mother tongue. Lack of mother tongue book can become a challenge for a teacher to teach.

#### Teacher Training Programs:

To overcome the challenges associated with implementing mother tongue-based instruction, comprehensive and targeted teacher training programs are essential. These programs should focus on enhancing teachers' language proficiency in regional languages, equipping them with pedagogical strategies specific to those languages, and promoting cultural sensitivity in the classroom.

#### Development of Teaching Materials:

A critical challenge lies in the development and availability of high-quality teaching materials, including textbooks, workbooks, and supplementary resources, in regional languages. The lack of adequate and standardized materials can hinder the effectiveness of instruction and limit students' access to quality educational resources. Developing new learning material in mother tongue requires huge investment especially for languages that do not have a script (Konkani, Khasi, Meitei)

#### Transition from Secondary to Higher Education:

Another challenge arises when students transition from secondary education, where they receive instruction in their mother tongue, to higher education, where the medium of instruction is often English or another language. Ensuring that students

acquire the necessary proficiency in English or other languages becomes crucial to their success in higher education and future career opportunities.

#### Examination of Challenges:

##### Linguistic Diversity: Implications and Solutions:

The linguistic diversity of India presents both challenges and opportunities. While it is difficult to cater to all regional languages individually, promoting multilingualism and offering language choices can help strike a balance. Additionally, developing language-specific teacher training programs, promoting collaboration among different linguistic communities, and leveraging technology for language learning can address some of the challenges posed by linguistic diversity. It is not necessary that in a class only one kind of students speaking a regional language will be there. The group can be diverse and then the medium of instruction will be difficult.

##### Impact on the child:

The NEP2020 has advocated that wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least grade 5 but preferably till grade 8 will be mother tongue. But once the child turns 6 and is admitted to the primary school he /she will experience bewilderment, confusion and may not be able to comprehend the teaching as he is not exposed to the new medium of instruction. This can have deep long lasting impact on the child. His confidence and self esteem may suffer.

Parents too say, “What is the point of sending a child to an English medium if they have to be taught in mother tongue?” According to the parents you cannot grow and prosper in today’s world without learning English. It may lead to economic divide and discrimination between those who can afford English medium schools and those who cannot and the latter will lose out on opportunities that are higher paying

Some experts also have the view that it would hamper a child’s future prospects. Due to globalization our children can work anywhere in the world and teaching in mother tongue may impact the communication skills and they may lag behind. Teaching for higher education is invariably through English language. Creating a comfortable environment will make students dependent on the mother tongue and will lose interest in learning English.

##### Availability of Proficient Teachers: Strategies and Initiatives:

Addressing the shortage of proficient teachers requires a multi-pronged approach. Incentivizing and supporting teacher training programs in regional languages, recruiting native speakers from local communities, and leveraging technology for language learning can help overcome this challenge.

##### Teacher Training Programs: Enhancing Pedagogical Skills:

Teacher training programs need to focus not only on improving teachers' language proficiency but also on equipping them with effective pedagogical strategies specific to regional languages. These programs should emphasize the development of culturally responsive teaching practices that foster an inclusive learning environment.

We have different states with different boards of education and they need to be included to implement this change.

#### Development of Teaching Materials: Resources and Innovations:

Efforts should be made to develop high-quality teaching materials in regional languages. This can be achieved through collaborations with educational publishers, utilizing open educational resources, involving local communities in content creation, and exploring innovative approaches such as digital resources and interactive learning platforms.

#### Transition from Secondary to Higher Education: Bridging the Gap:

To facilitate a smooth transition, bridging programs can be implemented to provide additional language support and academic preparation. Reforms in higher education entrance examinations can also be considered to ensure that language proficiency requirements are reasonable and fair. Furthermore, integrating English language training programs and offering exposure to other languages in the curriculum can help students develop the necessary language skills for higher education and career prospects.

#### Resistance to change:

There may be resistance from some sections of the society .the perception that learning English leads to success in the world may be the cause. It will require sustained effort to enlighten the public about the advantages of using mother tongue in learning.

#### Outcomes and Benefits of Mother Tongue-Based Instruction:

##### Enhanced Learning Outcomes:

Research has consistently shown that children grasp concepts better when taught in their mother tongue or a language they are familiar with. Mother tongue-based instruction facilitates better comprehension, engagement, and retention of knowledge, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes and academic performance. Learning mother tongue develops critical thinking and better grasp of the curriculum. It overcomes the gap between the parents and the institutions too.

##### Inclusive Education and Cultural Identity:

The use of mother tongue in education promotes inclusivity by recognizing and valuing the cultural and linguistic diversity of students. It allows students to connect more deeply with their roots, preserves cultural identities, and fosters a sense of belonging in the classroom. It is important because it will help the students to become closer to their culture and identity.

##### Preservation of Indigenous Languages:

Mother tongue-based education plays a pivotal role in preserving indigenous languages and cultural heritage. By providing formal education in regional languages, this approach safeguards linguistic diversity and prevents the gradual erosion of indigenous languages over time.

##### Reduced Dropout Rates:

When students receive education in their mother tongue, they feel more connected to the curriculum and are less likely to drop out of school. Mother tongue-based instruction has been shown to reduce dropout rates, particularly among marginalized communities, thus improving educational attainment and social mobility.

Development of Stronger Language Foundations:

Proficiency in multiple languages, including the mother tongue, equips students with strong language skills. This multilingual competency enhances communication abilities, critical thinking, and cultural understanding, preparing students to navigate an increasingly interconnected world.

Better engagement:

Students are more engaged in the learning process when they study in mother tongue as they understand the content more effectively.

Improved cognitive development:

Students are familiar with their language so they retain and grasp easily and develop cognitive abilities more effectively leading to better learning outcomes.

Improved communication skills:

Students who learn in their mother tongue, they read better and understand complex texts easily, which helps them in the future careers.

Conclusion:

The implementation of mother tongue as a medium of instruction in India's NEP 2020 presents several challenges, ranging from linguistic diversity to teacher availability, training, and resource development. In line with recommendations of NEP 2020, developing and operationalising a curricular framework to actualize the benefits of learning in mother tongue in schools, is a top priority for ministry of education. However, by addressing these challenges and leveraging the potential outcomes, mother tongue-based instruction can contribute to a more inclusive and effective education system. Policymakers, educators, and stakeholders need to collaborate and develop strategies that promote multilingualism, enhance teacher training programs, create high-quality teaching materials, and facilitate the transition to higher education. Through such concerted efforts, the NEP 2020's emphasis on mother tongue-based instruction can pave the way for a culturally sensitive, linguistically diverse, and equitable education system in India.

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