

# NEP 2020 and Indian diversity: Challenges in achieving its aim of three-language formula in Hindi speaking states

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## Abstract

National Education Policy 2020 has recommended emphatically that students must be taught, in primary classes, three language out of which there must be two Indian languages. It aims at teaching more languages to students as language is power and teaching and learning of the language will also contribute to the sustenance of the Indian languages. For the states where the languages included in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the constitution are spoken it seems feasible but for the states i.e. Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, etc. where Hindi is their scheduled language and dialects are spoken but have no mention in the 8th Schedule of the constitution it may face the greatest challenges. This may never be overlooked that India is a land of diversity. As it's a well-known fact that language is power, it may never be denied that language proves a discriminatory and harassing tool too to those who belong to underprivileged sections of society such as women and Dalits. Keeping in view the language politics at various levels and aims of NEP 2020, this paper attempts to investigate the challenges faced in achieving the desired results based on the three-language formula centring on the underprivileged sections of Indian society. To study this, some literary narratives and language politics and movements in India will be the material for analysis. To analyse material, the postcolonial theory will be used as a tool. The study proves that the three-language formula does not empower underprivileged sections in general and in Hindi-speaking regions in particular.

**Keywords:** Dalit, women empowerment, language politics, Angrezi Hatao abhiyan, language of gods, English goddess, foreign language, the language of rulers

## Introduction

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an important document of India. It aims to focus on from primary to higher education in terms of pedagogy, curriculum, accessibility, inclusivity, infrastructure, etc. considering socio-economic diversity in India. In this mission, it has also emphasised teaching-learning through mother tongue at least at primary level for which it has recommended necessary provisions to translate this it into reality in the field of science and technology too. Besides, it concentrates on the three-language formula in school education out of which at least two languages must be from the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Indian Constitution.

As India is a multilingual nation, in the majority of the states; Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra etc., the languages spoken as mother tongue are included in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the constitution. Therefore, it's quite feasible for these to select two Indian languages i.e. local and Hindi which is an official language too in many states and centre beside one foreign language under this formula. But contrary to these, the states i.e. Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, etc. where dialects are spoken which have not been given the status of languages and are not included in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of constitution face problems to select two Indian languages. In the former case, they can easily select the spoken languages and they may easily appoint teachers too. But in the latter's case, as their only spoken language is Hindi, these are left with to opt for uncommon language such as Sanskrit which is not the language of Masses. Besides, in general languages and their literature hardly include the marginalised voices as India is a country of diversity in terms of caste, class, race, ethnicity, etc.

### **Aims and Objective**

Thus, in this backdrop, this paper attempts to investigate the possible challenges in the implementation of three-language formula for teaching-learning in multilingual, multicultural, and diverse Indian society. Besides, it also tries to situate linguistic hegemony and politics in India in terms of job opportunities and equitable linguistic teaching-learning.

### **Method and Material**

For this study, National Education Policy 2020 would be the primary source in addition to some literary narrative and politico-linguistic movements in Indian history. Besides, the socio-economic-and-cultural difference and language teaching-learning would also be material for study. The study centres around two aspects of language: first, challenges in language learning under the NEP 2020 formula for certain states; second, the dialectics of language politics and job opportunities in the country. To accomplish this study, the postcolonial theory would be used to analyse the selected material.

### **Discussion**

MHRD (2020) states that there will be a great demand of humanities and arts as India is going to be a developed country and also the third-largest economy. Consequently, the NEP 2020 recommends three-language formula as children pick up the cognitive learning very fast

from the early age. Under this formula, NEP 2020 recommends two Indian languages mentioned in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Indian constitution are necessarily to be taught to students. Since, Hindi is the fourth most-spoken first language in the world. India is no exception for it is a widely largely spoken language by the people of India. Jain (2018) states that Hindi is the mother tongue of 44% of people in India. Though, India is a multilingual country yet film industry has made the Hindi language a language of every citizen. Since, Hindi offers great job opportunities than any other Indian language in the field of the film and TV industry, advertising, songs, and dialogue writing besides teaching and writing it may be easily be opted for by any student in India. Therefore, the states where people speak the regional language mentioned in the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule opt for Hindi and their own regional language under the three-language formula that prepares students to pick both the languages very fast as both are spoken languages at home or in the nation.

But, the problems arise in the states i.e. Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, etc. where unscheduled languages/dialects are spoken which may not be taught under the three-language formula of NEP. For example, in Haryana, Haryanavi is the spoken dialect and but the medium of instruction there remains Hindi only. In such a situation, the state is left with the choice to opt for other scheduled languages such as Sanskrit, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, etc. Tamil, Telugu Kannada, etc. which are not spoken languages in northern India or Hindi-speaking states; consequently, the teaching-learning of these languages becomes difficult because the student may never get the environment to learn except in the language classrooms. Therefore, the majority of Hindi-speaking states offer Sanskrit as being ancient and classical language as the second Indian language. The teaching-learning of Sanskrit gets limited to the classroom only for not being the mass language. Therefore, the teaching of any language of any other state meets the same fate as Sanskrit does. Therefore, as soon as the students have the option to leave any language, they immediately unsubscribe from Sanskrit or other Indian language that is not spoken in the state.

Further, as policy emphasises to make education inclusive for all sections of society it has recommended numerous measures to achieve its target. Mere provisions and an increase in the students' enrolment are not helpful until the environment be students friendly and conclusive. Exclusivity is a great challenge to translate NEP 2020's dream of inclusive education into reality. Recent case the case of Bhojanmata, a female cook in Uttarakhand's govt. school is enough to underline the seemingly invisible but static problem. In this case,

upper caste students denied eating the mid-day-meal cooked by a lower caste cook. Rajput (2021) reports that “it came to light that several upper caste students from classes 6-8 were refusing to eat the meals prepared by her. Subsequently, she was fired by the education department.” The caste has deeply rooted in India that even educational institutions are not free from it. So, it is quite possible that if the upper caste people don’t eat food cooked by lower castes howcome they include them or their voices in school syllabi and text books. Under SC Atrocities Act, there are still provisions for discrimination or any kind of abuse; verbal or physical but ironically there are no provisions for them to be represented in school syllabi. Gramsci (1971) regarding the negative role of institutions in social change argues that school are institutions of socialisation and to maintain the status quo. Therefore, this takes place first in form of a syllabus. Consequently, the school syllabi remain hegemonic which further marginalises the marginalised students.

With regard to school syllabi, Illaiah (1996) contends that marginalised self hardly finds integration and formation in pedagogical structure. For the stories of Rama and Krishna in the syllabus, Illaiah (1996, as cited in Singh, 2019) records that “For Brahmin-Baniya students there were their childhood stories, very familiar. . . . The boys bore the names of these Gods; the girls the names of the Goddesses. I distinctly remember how alien all these names appeared to me.” Illaiah (1996, p. 15) continues that “a Telgu textbook which talked about Kalidasa’s *Meghasandesham*, Bommera Potanna’s *Bhagavatam*, or Nannaya and Tikkanna’s *Mahabharatha*. . . .? We did not share the contents of either; we do not find our lives reflected in their narratives.”

Thus this is not only a single case of exclusion of marginalised voices in syllabi but there are countless example across region and languages. To reiterate, Gaikwad (2009) also exposes the inconsistency in the life of Dalit and textual narratives in the school syllabus. Gaikwad (2009, p. 62) attests Illaiah (1996) and reveals in his autobiography that “When I opened the text-book for Marathi on the first page, I used to see: ‘India is my country, All Indian are my brothers and sisters, I am proud of its rich and varied heritage.’” Thus under nationalism and brotherhood, the lived experiences of marginalised sections are neglected and a very idealistic picture is presented contrary to the realities.

Gaikwad (2009, as cited in Singh and Tripathy, 2018) further discloses in sheer amazement that “I used to wonder if all this were true, we were being beaten with false allegations of theft, when in fact we had committed no theft; why they beat my mother, pulled

at her sari and asked her to hand it over alleging it to be stolen property.” Thus, there are various questions that surface in mind of common people and particularly the marginalised ones. Since, the syllabus remains exclusive, the culture, food habits, dresses, etc. of Dalits are alien to the mainstream students and teachers and so be the Dalit students. The intentional exclusion of marginalised groups from the syllabus or cultural hegemony results in dropout and insipidness which is why the aim of inclusive education fails.

So, it is not only the issue of the practicability of the selection of a second language for teaching-learning in Hindi speaking states but the hegemonic structure of the syllabus too. Further, language also helps in employment too. Hulett (2019) claims that the power of language can help in business and career. And English indeed offer great career opportunities yet as an anticolonial gesture, India has witnessed linguistic movement too. The socialists and other rightists had launched a movement against English. In this connection, Aiyar (2004) contends that the Jan Sangh in 1963 “launched a violent agitation for abolishing English not only in official use but in shop signs, street signs, and even car number plates.” Socialists were in no way lagging behind in this movement and they were agitating with the slogan ‘Angrezi Hatao.’ All these agitators wanted Hindi as the official language across the country. This may be a political agenda to prove pure Hindustani or lover of mother tongue but the anglophile attitude of southern states of India reveals the politics of language and employment. C N Annadurai, first Chief Minister of DMK, perceived this move of Socialists and Rightists as Hindi imperialism.

To counter this anti English movement, Singh (2020) contends that he introduced English in all govt. institutions to facilitate all underprivileged sections’ students to keep Hindi-wallah at bay in central services. Contrarily, to enter into the state services of such states, the candidate has mandatorily to qualify for the local language test which all the Hindi-belt students are unable to do that. And this is the practice across states in India where scheduled languages are spoken.

Contrary to the Indian language politics across the country in terms of employment Sanskrit that Hindi belt students are left with is in no state a compulsory paper to qualify for employment, except in specific domains of employment. Most of the jobs Sanskrit creates are in teaching. Further, as Sanskrit is an ancient language, literature in this language is also a classic one that doesn’t room the marginalised representation thus it again aliens the marginalised students to study it. In reality, Sanskrit is neither the spoken language in India

except for religious rituals nor employment language because according to the varna system, non-brahmins are forbidden to perform religious rituals. Therefore, religion and ritualistic prescription has reduced Sanskrit to the level of brahmanic language. It is neither the language of professions nor of business and economy. Thus, it offers limited employment opportunities to a limited but privileged section only. Therefore, the teaching-learning of this language is not a lucrative one. Consequently, student have to opt for the Sanskrit language under the language-formula only.

## **Conclusion**

The above discussion shows that the three-language formula out of which two must necessarily be Indian languages recommended in NEP 2020 is indeed a great step towards the promotion and conservation of languages. But, the problem arises in the case of the Hindi-belt students. These students are disadvantaged ones in general and marginalised ones in particular in comparison of the students of other states where scheduled languages are spoken. The option these students are left with to study under the Indian languages formula is Sanskrit which is not a spoken language but a scriptural and ancient language. It lags in term of job opportunities even. Further, the syllabus of Sanskrit is more exclusive from the perspective of others. Therefore, the absence of environment for learning a second Indian language, exclusive syllabus, limited or no job opportunities are the challenges in implement of three-language formula and aim of inclusive education in case of students of Hindi-speaking states in general and marginalised students in particular.

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