

Sustainable Multilingualism in Indian Higher Education

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Abstract:

The present article focuses on the concept of sustainable development of multilingualism as directed by National Education Policy-2020. Education is one of the most fundamental elements in social and economic development. Multilingualism is one of the most relevant social phenomena of the present age Indian education. This paper provides the general scope of sustainable multilingualism in Indian Higher Education.

Key Words: Higher Education, Language Learning, Multilingualism, Pedagogy, Language Policies.

Multilingualism in India is a product of its history and a reflection of its diverse cultures. Schools and universities play a vital role in maintaining multilingualism and in changing its nature. Planning for the development of Indian languages starts at the school level to ensure that it allows the multilingual base to continue. For the students, the motivation to learn several languages arises from advantages which might possibly act as encouragements for learning more and more languages. These advantages range from better jobs to enjoying diverse cinema, reading magazines and travelling.

Accepting the fact that the linguistic landscape of India is tremendously complex, we have not paid enough attention to the language issues in education in proportion to their primacy and functional importance in the entire framework. It is necessary to adopt a practical approach to linguistic usage in education, and take into account the mechanisms of regulation of language in plural societies. Multilingual and multicultural education requires, apart from positive attitudes to speech variation, a degree of planning, proficiency in the language of the classroom and that of learners, and a high level of skill in teaching. The understanding of the socio-cultural process is

considered incomplete without an understanding of the dialectical relationship between language, education and society.

The recently launched National Policy of Education (NEP) 2020 talks about the multilingualism and the power of language in student's education. According to NEP 2020, all languages will be taught with high quality to all students; a language does not need to be the medium of instruction for it to be taught and learned well (NEP 13). The policy has also suggested the "three languages formula" for the learners.

India also has an extremely rich literature in other classical languages, including classical Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia. In addition to these classical languages Pali, Persian, and Prakrit; and their works of literature too must be preserved for their richness and for the pleasure and enrichment of posterity. As India becomes a fully developed country, the next generation will want to partake in and be enriched by India's extensive and beautiful classical literature (NEP 14)

The question 'What is multilingualism?' is not so simple. The basic understanding of what multilingualism is often deviates for researchers depending on their differing backgrounds and ideologies. Definitions include: "Multilingualism is the presence of a number of languages in one country or community or city"; "Multilingualism is the use of three or more languages"; and "Multilingualism is the ability to speak several languages". In this last sense, multilingualism is widely regarded as 'a natural state of humankind' (Flynn, 2016). The neuroscientist would measure multilingualism in the context of the way the brain is prearranged among those who speak multiple languages.

The term multilingualism is used here in NEP 2020 to refer to the use of three and more languages and is distinguished, where appropriate, from bilingualism, the use of two languages. In this perspective bilingualism is taken to be a special case of multilingualism rather than vice versa. Multilingualism helps in national unity particularly if people learn national languages besides their native languages and lingua. In the process, the people concerned will automatically embrace the value of togetherness. Multilingualism practices enhance intellectual flexibility and creativity. Recent studies have indicated that children who grow up in a supportive environment speaking more than one language from an early age are more perceptive and intellectually flexible than those who speak one language. Multilingualism provides a competitive edge in today's job market. Besides the academic and professional credentials, employers also look for fluency in the desired languages as an added advantage. Therefore, being a multilingual is a plus to any job

seeker in this millennium. This can only be realized if multilingualism is entrenched in the learning curriculum.

When foreign and native languages are included in the multilingualism practices in education, then we should always try to avoid imposing these languages to the people. A keen measure and clear framework should be taken into account because imposing languages to people is dangerous and may cause tensions amongst different ethnic and speech communities. Multilingualism helps in national unity especially if people learn national languages besides their indigenous languages and lingua franca. In the process, the people concerned will automatically embrace the value of togetherness.

In order to appeal to the millennial learner, an individualized approach is needed; emphasizing the opportunity for personal growth and for the development of a global mindset and values in addition to the development of the linguistic, intercultural, and technological skills needed to maximize one's potential to play a global role through one's chosen profession. Access to foreign language education, whether in the classroom or online, and the education and training of qualified teachers are essential. The method itself is not as important as the message - that a multilingual education and mindset benefits language learners in the present, and will continue to do so in the future. A paradigm shift in terms of attitudes toward foreign language learning and access for all too foreign language education is necessary.

India is a multilingual country and best it remains so. The importance of the link languages cannot be denied. Language after all is a medium of interaction and this purpose has to be served. Therefore learning multiple languages is important. Multilingualism is an inherent human trait. It denotes both the ability of humans to use three and more languages, and social situations where such capacity is utilized. The use of multiple languages accompanying human activities is behaviour unique to humans. Anthropologists mention multilingualism from the dawn of humanity. Current multilingualism is a global phenomenon, intermixed within the main globalization processes, and plays a central role in maintaining and advancing contemporary global civilization. Multilingual language practices differ not only from those of the past, but are extremely diversified in today's world. They are characterized by diversity of users, languages and, in particular, a diversity of multilingual arrangements across the world and communities.

The hallmark feature of current multilingualism is the radical change in how languages are used. Today neither single languages nor the entire language range serve as units of language circulation. Notably, sets of languages labeled as dominant language constellations are the

prevailing patterns of language practices now. The propagation of language nominations which define and describe the role of each particular language in particular contexts is noteworthy. The new linguistic dispensation includes monolingual, bilingual and multilingual arrangements. Of these, multilingualism is the leading component of the new dispensation.

As higher education institutions attract students with diverse linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds, higher education plays a vital role in promoting the learning and use of multiple languages, as well as sustaining the vitality of these languages as important resources for the communities in different contexts. Therefore, we need concerted efforts to address these critical issues in the pursuit of sustainable multilingualism in higher education, so that students may have opportunities to develop multilingual competence, and use their linguistic resources to enhance their educational experience in the medium of a language other than their own.

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