

## **A STUDY OF THE NEEDS AND PROBLEMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF MOTHER LANGUAGE AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION UNDER NEP2020: VOICES OF SCHOOL TEACHERS**

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**Shabnam \* Savita Kaushal \* \***

**"Judging the youth on their language instead of their talent is the biggest injustice."**

**(Hon.PM of India, Shri Narendra Modi, 2023)**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Language plays a vital role in the teaching-learning process. In India's multilingual context, the medium of instruction has become a significant topic of discussion. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, introduced by the Government of India, marks a transformative change in the education system, emphasizing quality, equity, and inclusion. One of its major proposals is to promote the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction, at least until Grade 5, and preferably up to Grade 8, to enhance comprehension and cognitive development in students (Government of India, 2020). Research supports this approach, showing that children acquire knowledge more effectively when taught in their native language during the foundational years (UNESCO, 2003). Studies suggest that instruction in the mother tongue helps improve academic performance, cognitive abilities, and overall school engagement (Petrovic and Olmstead, 2001). In a linguistically diverse country like India, where over 19,500 languages and dialects are spoken (Census of India, 2011), implementing such a policy presents both opportunities and challenges. While the policy aims to promote inclusivity, reduce dropouts, and bridge educational disparities, its successful implementation is dependent on several factors, including the availability of instructional materials in multiple languages, teacher preparedness, and the ability to adapt curricula to local contexts (Menon, 2021).

School teachers, as the primary agents in the classroom, are central to the success of this policy. Their preparedness, perceptions, and experiences will significantly influence how the NEP 2020's mother tongue instruction mandate is realized at the grassroots level. Teacher voices are essential to understanding the practical challenges, including the lack

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\* Junior Research Fellow (Ph.D. Scholar), Department of Teacher Training and Non-Formal Education, IASE, Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

\* \* Professor, Department of Teacher Training and Non-Formal Education, IASE, Faculty of Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

of training, resource constraints, and varying levels of support from school administration and parents (Sharma, 2021). This study aims to explore the perspectives of school teachers on the implementation of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction, underlining the needs, problems, and potential solutions that can guide policymakers and stakeholders in creating a more effective and equitable educational environment.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Recent studies have further elucidated the challenges faced by students and teachers in vernacular medium schools regarding English language instruction. For instance, Ghuge (2024) examined the difficulties associated with English language teaching in rural schools across India, highlighting societal and individual barriers that hinder effective education. Yadav and Yadav (2023) explored the impact of policies under the National Education Policy 2020 on English language pedagogy in higher education. They identified significant challenges in implementing these policies, particularly for students transitioning from vernacular to English instruction. Moreover, Morve and Maurya (2022) analyzed the dynamics of linguistically diverse English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms in India, emphasizing the complexities that arise when students are primarily speakers of regional languages. Gamit (2012) examined English teachers in Gujarati medium schools, revealing that while textbooks and teaching materials were deemed adequate, students from marginalized backgrounds struggled with English, adversely affecting their academic performance. Similarly, Shweta (2012) reported that Hindi medium students enrolled in B.El.Ed. courses faced significant difficulties in locating study materials in Hindi, which negatively impacted their academic performance and self-confidence when compared to their English medium peers. Javalgekar (2012) identified challenges for English teachers working with vernacular medium students in Mumbai slums, emphasizing inadequate teaching materials and methods, and the necessity for additional coaching to help students succeed in exams. In the context of Assamese medium schools, Saikia (2013) found that English teachers often lacked in-service training and primarily focused on grammar, resulting in limited exposure to communicative English and a scarcity of resources. Rehman (2015) studied the implementation of English as a medium of instruction in Rawalpindi, noting that students who began learning English later faced considerable challenges, compounded by inadequate resources and ineffective teaching methods. Lastly, Bhavar (2017) observed minimal student interest and participation in Marathi medium schools in Pune, with teachers struggling to engage students in learning English. Collectively, these studies underscore the pressing need for improved resources, training, and pedagogical approaches to enhance English language instruction in vernacular medium contexts.

## **NEED OF THE STUDY**

Despite existing research, there is a limited exploration of students' and teachers' perspectives on implementing mother tongues as a medium of instruction. This study aims to address this gap by understanding the challenges and needs related to teaching in mother tongues under NEP 2020. Previous studies (Shweta, 2012; Gamit, 2012; Javalgekar, 2012; Rehman, 2015; Islam, 2015; Bhavar, 2017) reveal gaps in methodology, perspectives, and implications, highlighting the need for this research to provide insights and propose solutions.

## **METHOD :**

This descriptive study employs a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to gather comprehensive insights into the implementation of mother tongues as a medium of instruction in government schools.

## **Population and Sample**

The population for this study comprised language teachers from Delhi Government schools, selected for their representation of cultural and linguistic diversity. A purposive sampling method was employed to identify the sample. In total, 80 teachers were selected from 20 Delhi Government schools, with four teachers chosen from each school. The sample included teachers specializing in English, Hindi, and various regional languages, ensuring a comprehensive range of perspectives on mother-tongue instruction.

## **Data Collection Tool**

Data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative insights into the implementation of mother-tongue instruction. The questionnaire consisted of 20 items, incorporating a combination of open- and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were designed to gather quantitative data on teachers' perceptions of the challenges associated with implementing mother-tongue instruction. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements related to teacher preparedness, availability of resources, parental attitudes, and technological support. This format facilitated statistical analysis, enabling the identification of prevalent trends and issues. To complement the quantitative data, open-ended questions were included to elicit detailed responses from teachers regarding their experiences and suggestions. This qualitative component provided participants with the opportunity to express their views on the specific needs and challenges they encounter in teaching mother languages, thus offering deeper contextual insights. The questionnaire underwent expert review to ensure its validity and alignment with the research objectives. Additionally, a pilot test was conducted

with a small group of teachers to refine the questions and enhance clarity before full-scale administration.

### Data Analysis

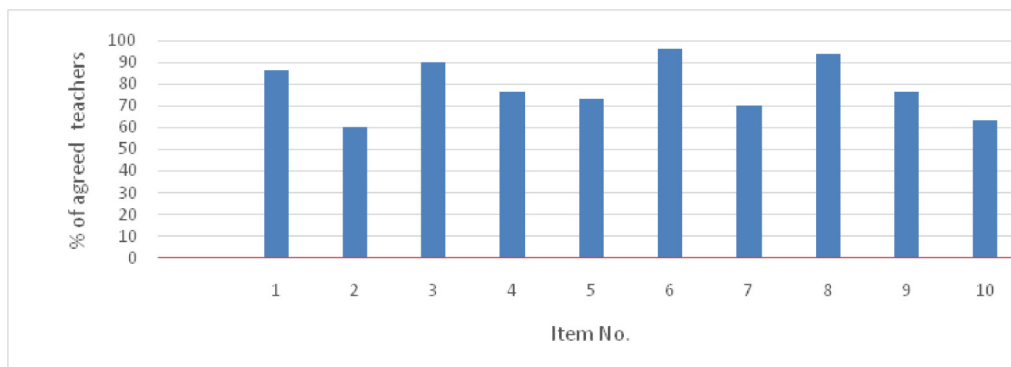
The data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and needs associated with implementing mother language instruction under NEP 2020. The quantitative data obtained from close-ended questions was analyzed using percentages of teachers agreeing with key challenges. The qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions was analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes related to teachers' perceptions, needs, and the challenges of implementing mother-tongue instruction.

### RESULTS:

**Objective 1:** To Explore Teachers' Perspectives on the Challenges of Implementing the Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction.

**Table No.1: Percentage of Teachers Agreeing on Key Challenges for Implementing the Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction in Schools**

Sr. No.	Statements	Agreement of the Teachers (%)
1.	Unavailability of mother language experts and competent teachers in schools.	86.66%
2.	Unavailability of teaching-learning resources and textbooks in the mother tongue.	60 %
3.	Lack of infrastructure is a problem for implementing the mother tongue.	90 %
4.	Unavailability of audio-video and ICT-based resources in the mother language.	76.33%
5.	Teaching-learning in the mother language lags behind students, creating an inferiority complex and low self-confidence.	73.33 %
6.	Usually, weaker sections prefer to study in the mother language, not the privileged class of society.	96.33 %
7.	The problem of reliability and credibility of translation persists.	70 21%
8.	Parental resistance is a challenge in implementing the mother language as a medium of instruction in schools.	93.66 %
9.	Limited job opportunities for mother-language medium students.	76.66 %
10.	The mother language as a medium of instruction is insignificant for STEM Education	63.33%



**Fig Percentage of Teachers' Agreement regarding the key problems for implementing the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in schools**

The quantitative data was analyzed descriptively. The closed-ended questions provided numerical insights into the extent of agreement among teachers regarding various challenges. Key findings included:

#### **Unavailability of Language Expert Teachers**

A significant 86.66% of teachers reported a critical shortage of language experts, particularly for mother tongues. The prevalent practice of assigning language teaching to non-specialist teachers highlights the urgent need for educators with specialized language expertise and passion. This gap impacts the quality of language education, as specialized training and aptitude are crucial for effective instruction. This aligns with findings from Diba and Priyadarshini (2023), who emphasize the necessity for teacher training to enhance mother tongue education.

#### **Unavailability of Quality Bilingual Teaching-Learning Resources**

Sixty percent of teachers noted a lack of quality bilingual and multilingual resources, particularly in school libraries. This scarcity hampers the academic progress of students studying in their mother tongue, often causing them to lag behind their peers despite their inherent talents. Access to diverse and high-quality resources is essential for fostering bilingual proficiency and supporting academic success.

#### **Pedagogical Practice Challenges**

Teachers observed that students struggle with mastering languages, complicating their understanding of complex terminologies in subjects like mathematics and science. Reliance on textbooks and blackboards, with limited access to supplementary resources, further restricts effective learning. Adopting varied and interactive teaching methods could significantly enhance language comprehension and subject knowledge (Codilla et al., 2023).

### **Inadequate Infrastructure for Mother Tongue Instruction**

A striking 90% of respondents highlighted inadequate infrastructure for mother tongue instruction. Schools are often unprepared for bilingual and multilingual classrooms, and overcrowded conditions impede personalized attention. Addressing these infrastructure gaps is crucial for creating supportive learning environments that accommodate diverse linguistic needs.

### **Lack of Audio-Video and ICT-Based Resources**

Seventy-six percent of teachers reported a lack of audio-video and ICT tools in classrooms, despite their potential effectiveness in language teaching. Overcrowded classrooms and administrative pressures further limit the use of these resources. Integrating ICT tools can enhance language learning, making it more engaging and effective.

### **Preference of Weaker Sections for Mother Tongue Education**

An overwhelming 96.33% of respondents observed that economically and socially disadvantaged groups prefer mother tongue education in government schools. In contrast, privileged classes rarely opt for it. This preference underscores the need for equitable access to quality education in mother tongues, bridging social and economic divides.

### **Inferiority Complex and Low Self-Confidence**

A notable 73.66% of teachers agreed that students studying in their mother tongue often experience an inferiority complex and low self-confidence. Societal biases favouring English medium education perpetuate this issue, impacting students' self-esteem and academic performance. Promoting the value and importance of mother tongue education can help counteract these negative perceptions.

### **Issues with Translation Reliability and Credibility**

Seventy percent of teachers questioned the reliability of translation tools like Google Translate and AI applications, noting frequent inaccuracies in translating academic content. These inaccuracies can lead to misunderstandings, highlighting the need for high-quality, reliable translation resources for academic use.

### **Parental Resistance to Mother Tongue Education**

A significant 93.66% of respondents reported that parents prefer English as the medium of instruction, driven by perceptions of its superiority and career benefits. This resistance poses a challenge to adopting mother tongue education, necessitating efforts to raise awareness about its advantages and long-term benefits. This resistance is consistent with research by Gaspar (2023), which noted similar parental apprehensions regarding language choice in education.

### **Limited Job Opportunities for Non-English Medium Students**

Seventy-six percent of teachers agreed that non-English medium students face limited job opportunities, often gravitating towards Arts and Humanities. Job providers and companies frequently prioritize English proficiency, marginalizing talented individuals from mother tongue backgrounds. Expanding job prospects and promoting linguistic diversity in the workforce is essential.

### **Mother Language in STEM Courses**

Sixty-three percent of respondents questioned the relevance of mother tongue instruction in STEM courses, particularly in prestigious institutions like IITs, IISc, and NITs. Balancing native language promotion with globalization and privatization demands presents a complex challenge in the educational landscape.

**Objective 2:** To identify the need for teaching in mother languages as a medium of instruction.

The qualitative data, derived from open-ended responses, was subjected to thematic analysis. This involved coding the responses to identify recurring themes related to teachers' needs and suggestions for effective implementation. Key themes that emerged from the analysis included:

#### **Better Reception and Understanding**

Teachers emphasized that children are more receptive to learning in their native language, facilitating better self-expression and connecting new knowledge with prior experiences. This approach enhances understanding and retention, fostering a deeper connection to the material.

#### **Increasing Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)**

Educators noted that offering education in the mother tongue could attract students from diverse backgrounds, thereby increasing the gross enrolment ratio. This inclusivity promotes educational access for all, regardless of linguistic background.

#### **Minimizing Dropout Rates**

The majority of teachers expressed that learning in the mother tongue can bridge educational gaps, boost confidence, and reduce dropout rates by making education more accessible and comprehensible. This approach supports continuous learning and academic success.

#### **Promoting Equity and Inclusion**

A majority of respondents stated implementing mother tongue instruction fosters an equitable educational culture, preserving cultural identity and promoting linguistic heritage.

The cognitive benefits of learning in one's native language contribute to stronger connections to roots and a sense of belonging.

These findings underscore the need for systemic changes in language education, including specialized teacher training, quality resources, infrastructure improvements, and shifts in societal attitudes towards mother tongue instruction. These findings underscore the complexity of implementing mother-tongue instruction in linguistically diverse settings and highlight the need for targeted interventions, including teacher training, resource development, and community engagement, to improve its effectiveness.

### **DISCUSSION:**

While the NEP 2020 policy is well-intentioned, there is a significant gap between its objectives and the realities teachers face on the ground. The challenges of linguistic diversity, insufficient training, and lack of resources create barriers that hinder the successful implementation of mother tongue instruction. The linguistic diversity of India, which is both its strength and a challenge, requires a more flexible approach to implementing the mother tongue instruction policy. Teachers in multilingual regions need additional support to manage classrooms where students speak different languages. Teachers are the frontline implementers of the NEP 2020 policy, and their voices must be central to its execution. Their insights suggest that a more gradual and flexible implementation process, supported by adequate training and resources, would be more effective. The NEP 2020 recommends that students learn in their mother tongue and recognize the vital role of teachers. Insights from this study can guide government officials, experts, and curriculum developers in seeking solutions and help policymakers understand the challenges and needs related to local language implementation. Addressing the obstacles to implementing NEP 2020 is essential for its success. This study calls stakeholders to action, emphasizing the need to address several issues in government schools before implementing mother tongue instruction. Key focus areas include:

- F Teacher Training and Recruitment: Invest in training programs for language teachers and actively recruit educators with specialized linguistic expertise.
- F Resource Development: Develop and provide high-quality bilingual and multilingual teaching resources to support effective language learning.
- F Infrastructure Improvements: Enhance infrastructure to create conducive learning environments for bilingual and multilingual education.
- F ICT and Audio-Video Integration: Invest in and integrate ICT and audio-video tools in classrooms to enhance language learning experiences.



- F Equity in Education: Promote equitable access to quality mother tongue education and address socio-economic disparities.
- F Changing Societal Attitudes: Raise awareness about the benefits of mother tongue education to improve student confidence and societal perceptions.
- F Translation Quality: Develop more accurate and credible translation tools for academic use.
- F Expanding Job Opportunities: Promote linguistic diversity in the workforce and expand job opportunities for non-English medium students.

By addressing these challenges and implementing these recommendations, the education system can better support language learning, promote equity, and enhance overall educational outcomes, aligning with the goals of NEP 2020.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The present study identifies several critical challenges in implementing mother tongue education, raising significant concerns for policymakers and stakeholders. The findings suggest that Indian languages have not been sufficiently valued or prioritized as medium of instruction, and creating multilingual classrooms presents substantial complexity. Teachers encounter numerous obstacles. To effectively implement NEP 2020, comprehensive professional development for teachers, the creation of adequate resources, and addressing parental concerns are essential. Policymakers must prioritize these areas to ensure a smooth transition to mother language instruction. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess ongoing implementation efforts and their impact on student outcomes. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underscores the importance of employing mother tongues or regional languages as the medium of instruction across all levels of education. Educational bodies such as the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the University Grants Commission (UGC), and the Ministry of Education (MoE) have initiated significant efforts to develop textbooks and other educational resources in Indian languages. However, several unresolved issues persist, necessitating a coordinated and sustained effort to address them. Promoting Indian languages as the medium of instruction from primary to higher education is crucial for safeguarding heritage and enhancing cognitive development, as Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi emphasised in 2021.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

The authors express profound gratitude to all participants for their invaluable participation, which was essential for completing this research. Additionally, the authors extend their

appreciation to the faculty members from different institutions for their expert guidance and suggestions.

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