



E-Content

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DEVELOPMENT TEAM

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1.9 Language and Educational Policy in India; Constitutional Provisions and policies of language education

Before the independence of India, English was an official language. It was the language of rulers, courts, banks, trade and industry, administration, link language between rulers and ruled and medium of instruction in schools, colleges and universities. So it occupied a privileged place in India. But with the attainment of Independence in 1947, the position of English in our education as well as in our national life came to be seriously questioned. Some national leaders supported English while some were committed to driving away English from India.

Many educationist and national leaders came to the conclusion that English should be replaced by one Indian language. But however, all of them were quite reluctant to drive away English from India owing to its worldwide importance. C.Rajgopalcharya, M.Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru supported English. Some leaders were advocating the Hindi language to be adopted as the national and official language of India but it was seriously opposed by some states of south India.

India being a multilingual country was in need of a language policy because it was a sentimental issue for its people. The forefathers of this country wisely dealt this issue through constitutional provisions and addressing the diverse language needs of the country. Let us know some of the constitutional provisions that define the language policy of India.

Article 343 : Official language of the Union

- 1. The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals.*
- 2. Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this Constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately before such commencement:*

Provided that the President may, during the said period, by order authorise the use of the Hindi language in addition to the English language and of the Devanagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals for any of the official purposes of the Union.

Notwithstanding anything in this article, Parliament may by law provide for the use, after the said period of fifteen years, of

- a. The English language, or*
- b. The Devanagari form of numerals, for such purposes as may be specified in the law.*

Article 350A: Facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage

It shall be the endeavor of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups and the President may issue such directions to any State as he considers necessary or proper for securing the provision of such facilities.

Article 351: Directive for development of the Hindi language

It shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.

All of the above articles or their sub-clauses clearly shows that the country has given due importance to English, Hindi and all other regional languages concerning their international, national and regional importance respectively.

Kothari Commission (1964-66) precisely introduced a ‘three language formula’ that advocates:

- a. The First language to be studied must be the mother tongue or the regional language.

- b. The Second language – In Hindi speaking States, the second language will be some other modern Indian language or English, and in non-Hindi speaking States, the second language will be Hindi or English.
- c. The Third language – In Hindi speaking States, the third language will be English or a modern Indian language not studied as the second language, and – In non-Hindi speaking States, the third language will be English or a modern Indian language not studied as the second language (Teaching of Indian Language, Position paper, NCERT, 2006.). But now in most of the states of India, English is taught as a compulsory subject from standard one to graduation. Today, Indian learners learn English as a second language.

The National Policy on Education (1986) and its revision, Programme of Action (1992) presented a detailed report regarding; three- language formula, improvements in the linguistic competencies at the different stages of education, Provision of facilities for the study of English and other foreign languages, and Development of Hindi language as a link language. The policy emphasized the use of regional languages as medium of instruction in higher education. The report mentioned the following:

“The energetic development of Indian Languages and literature is a sine qua non for educational and cultural development. Unless this is done, the creative energies of the people will not be released, standards of education will not improve, knowledge will not spread to the people and the gulf between the intelligentsia and masses will remain if not widen further. The regional languages are already in use as media of education at the primary and secondary stages. Urgent steps should now be taken to adopt them as media of education at the university stage.”(National Policy on Education (With Modifications Undertaken In 1992), page no. 39)

The POA (1992) in chapter 18, ‘Developing Languages (page no 94 – 98),’ observed that the implementation of the three language formula had been less than satisfactory on account of;

- a. All the languages are not being taught compulsorily at the secondary stage
- b. A classical language has been substituted for a modern Indian language in some States
- c. No concrete provision yet exists (though a scheme is likely to take off very soon) for the teaching of South Indian languages in the Hindi speaking states

- d. Duration for compulsory study of three languages varies and
- e. Competency levels to be achieved by learners of each language have not been precisely specified.

POA (1992) suggested following recommendations for the effective implementation of the Three Language Formula:

- a. Decision by States, State Boards of Secondary/schools education, etc., to make the study of three languages compulsory at the secondary stage;
- b. Prescription of the class from and the duration for which three languages will be taught;
- c. Specification of objectives of teaching different languages. The State Boards of Secondary Education will be asked to take uniform decisions in line with the recommendations of NCERT and CBSE in these matters; and
- d. Specification of levels of language proficiency to be reached in respect of each language. Language institutions under the Ministry like Kendriya Hindi Sansthan (KHS), Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) in consultation with NCERT would be asked to prescribe minimum competencies to be achieved.

POA (1992) also suggested a plan of action to implement the above recommendations. After POA (1992), the most noteworthy recommendations were given by National Curriculum Framework (2005).

The policy suggested promoting Hindi as a link language in the following recommendation:

“Every effort should be made to promote the development of Hindi. In developing Hindi as the link language, due care should be taken to ensure that it will serve, as provided for in Article 351 of the Constitution, as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India. The establishment, in non-Hindi States, of colleges and other institutions of higher education which use Hindi, as the medium of education should be encouraged.”(National Policy on Education (With Modifications Undertaken In 1992), page no. 40)

Another noteworthy language policy can be seen in National Curriculum Framework (2005). National Curriculum Framework (2005) in its third chapter, ‘Curricular Areas, School Stages and

Assessment, page no; 36-37' sheds light on language education in the country and suggested following guidelines:

- *Language teaching needs to be multilingual not only in terms of the number of languages offered to children but also in terms of evolving strategies that would use the multilingual classroom as a resource.*
- *Home language(s) of children should be the medium of learning in schools.*
- *If a school does not have provisions for teaching in the child's home language(s) at the higher levels, primary school education must still be covered by the home language(s). It is imperative that we honour the child's home language(s). According to Article 350A of our Constitution, 'It shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the State to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups'.*
- *Children will receive multilingual education from the outset. The three-language formula needs to be implemented in its spirit, promoting multilingual communicative abilities for a multilingual country.*
- *In the non-Hindi-speaking states, children learn Hindi. In the case of Hindi speaking states, children learn a language not spoken in their area. Sanskrit may also be studied as a Modern Indian Language (MIL) in addition to these languages.*
- *At later stages, the study of classical and foreign languages may be introduced.*

Home language means mother tongue of children. NCF (2005) asserted the importance of multilingualism and mentioned that "*Multilingualism, which is constitutive of the identity of a child and a typical feature of the Indian linguistic landscape, must be used as a resource, classroom strategy and a goal by a creative language teacher. This is not only the best use of a resource readily available but also a way of ensuring that every child feels secure and accepted and that no one is left behind on account of his/her linguistic background (NCF(2005), p. 36).*"

In this way, we have taken a short account of language policy of our country.

1.10 Points to Remember