

Linguistic Equity in Indian Schools: Comparative Policy Approaches and Recommendations

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Abstract: India has many languages; therefore, education policy should include them for equity and accessibility. This report analyzes India's multilingual education challenges and proposes solutions. Differences between students' native languages and teaching languages are the main difficulty. English proficiency frequently depends on social status and educational advantages. The 2020 Indian National Education Policy emphasizes mother or native languages and regional languages in primary education. This method improves the trilingual formula, which reduces student attrition and improves language skills. The scheme's success has been hampered by limited funding and policy implementation issues across sectors. This paper examines language policy in Kenya and Singapore to underline the need of adaptive and comprehensive education policies that recognize linguistic diversity and give equal opportunity for all language groups. Kenya has improved children's language skills and academic performance by using local language and progressively adding English in early school. By using English as the major language and teaching students their home language as a secondary language, Singapore has achieved educational inclusivity and diversity. Based on international experiences, this article proposes ways to improve India's trilingual strategy. To promote educational fairness and social cohesiveness. A better trilingual method improves kids' academic, social, and occupational abilities, according to research. The essay concludes that these policies may be costly and difficult to implement and recommends more efficient and comprehensive multilingual education policies to maintain development and success in the Indian education system.

1. Introduction

In India's multilingual society, education policy must accommodate several languages, affecting fairness and accessibility. This paper discusses the challenges of multilingual education in India and policy. The main difficulty is the discrepancy between students' mother tongues and the teaching language, as English ability is connected to social standing and education. India's National Education Policy 2020 emphasizes mother tongue or local language usage till fifth grade and includes regional languages in the curriculum [1]. This strategy improved the three-language formula. The program attempts to reduce student attrition and enhance language skills. However, limited funding and policy implementation across several sectors have hampered program efficacy. India's approach to Kenya and Singapore's approach shows the necessity for flexible and inclusive education policies that recognize linguistic diversity and provide all language groups equal opportunities.

2. Background and Evidences

India has a complicated educational system. To serve a diverse population, the school system uses 22 official languages and several dialects [10]. Clearly, this has caused problems and inequities. Wayback Machine's Indian language distribution map (Figure 1) shows Hindi, Marathi, and other languages' widespread usage. Schools typically educate in the local language, which may disadvantage non-native speakers and pupils from other languages. Tollefson and Tsui found that students are more engaged and successful when the language of teaching is their first language.

However, many Indian children cannot attend school in their native language due to economic or social barriers. As a consequence, student retention and academic performance have decreased. [14]

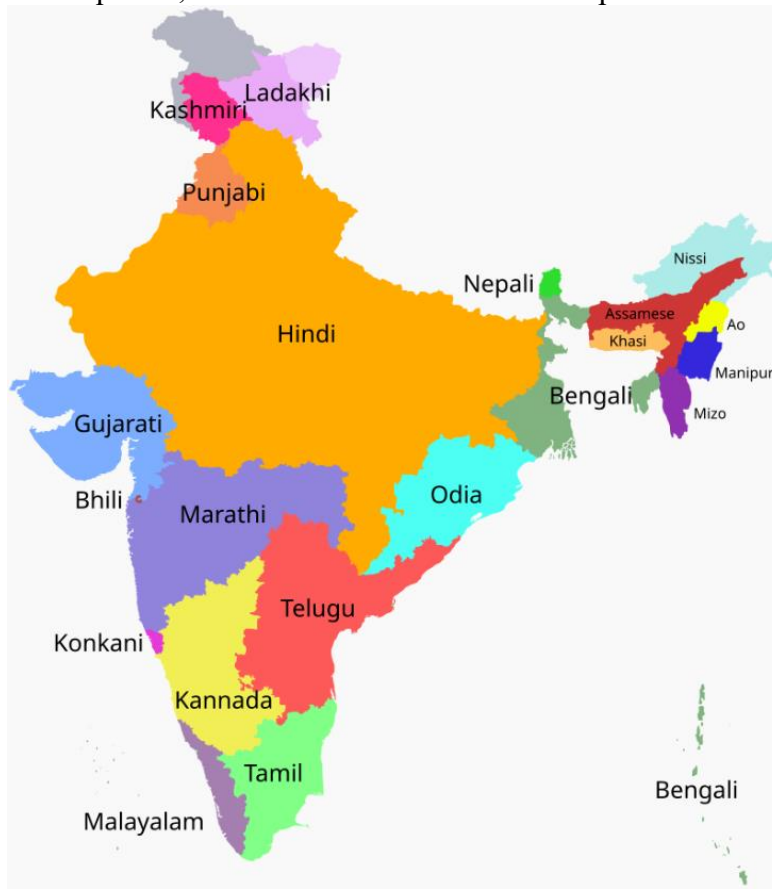


Figure 1: Main language distribution areas in India

Table 1: Percentage of dropouts among ever-enrolled persons for different levels of the last enrolment of the rural and urban area

Level of Last Enrolment	Rural (2007-08)	Urban (2007-08)	Rural (2017-2018)	Urban (2017-2018)
Pre-Primary	1.6	1.2	7.2	3.8
Primary	27.3	16.8	10.6	7.8
Upper Primary/Middle	30.6	23	18.2	15.2
Secondary	24.4	26.4	20.8	17.1
Higher Secondary	10.3	13.4	10.3	8.3
Diploma/Certificate (Below Graduate)	1	2.2	13.3	11.7
Graduation	3.9	12.9	6	4.2
Post-Graduation & Above	0.9	4.1	3.4	1.5
Diploma/Certificate (Graduate and Above)			7.8	3.4
All			13.8	9.6

English-medium schools exacerbate the discrepancies. English-speaking students have greater educational and job chances in India than non-English-speaking pupils [11]. Language barriers dramatically increase dropout and illiteracy rates among rural and economically disadvantaged groups. According to the Annual State of Education Report, multilingual students performed worse academically. Rural language-minority eighth-graders drop out at a rate of 14%, which is higher than the national average of 4%. The persistent effects of these inequities are seen by rural and urban India's 73.5% dropout and 87.7% literacy rates [18]. The urban-rural dropout gap across all educational levels is a social problem that requires government attention, although reducing between 2007-08 and 2017-18. Language affects academic achievement and prospects. Table 1 is the percentage of dropouts among ever-enrolled persons for different levels of the last enrolment of the

rural and urban area.

Long-term effects of language difficulties go beyond education and are a huge social concern. Top jobs, the Indian economy, and social cohesion are impacted by this mismatch. Several high-skill jobs need substantial training. Businesses like these exclude language-impaired students [12]. Many youngsters struggle academically due to language-based inequalities. Many people are ignorant of their full potential, limiting their economic contribution to India [7]. Inclusion and respect may be achieved by offering pupils of different languages equal educational chances. Internal stability and cohesion need unity in diverse India [26]. Education policy must be more inclusive and accept Indian students' linguistic diversity to solve these problems. These policies should promote multilingualism in schools and provide adequate resources to help all students [2].

3. Assemble Policy Alternatives

Indian and other countries have grappled with linguistic and intellectual gaps and sought several remedies. Minority language learners initially struggled since their native languages were different from the teaching languages in the 42-tribe country. To fix this, the government created the Basic Education Curriculum Framework. Early pre-primary education in catchment languages is offered [24]. Students acquire English reading and writing after two years of successful pre-primary [24]. English replaces local languages as the principal teaching language by grade 4. The curriculum includes Kiswahili, the national language [16]. Integration of indigenous languages and neutral English, which is not the native language of any Kenyan community, have gained this framework praise [24]. Thus, no side is benefited. This policy matters to India. Kenya and India practice multiculturalism. The school system is comparable but promotes minority languages differently. Kenyan policy may be adopted by India. Only 42 languages are spoken in Kenya. Many cultures and countries speak English and Swahili. Over 700 languages make India distinct. Each Indian state has a common language, compounding the situation, unlike Kenya, where two languages are too widespread in addition to indigenous ones. Comparing them may be tricky.

Moroccan projects aim to alleviate inequality like others. Cilliers describes Morocco as a Maghreb lower middle-income economy. Educational language limitations are country-specific. After independence in 1956, the government made Arabic the exclusive language of instruction. First done to defeat colonial masters and French [3]. The regime felt Arabic would legitimize nationalism and establish a new social identity. The Arabization strategy failed despite its apparent success. The nation's Arabization strategy failed for several reasons. Arabic originally hampered national education. Illiteracy increased, decreasing career prospects. The strategy failed but propagated fundamentalist attitudes among youngsters. Research suggests that the method failed because it devalued multilingualism and diversity and encouraged one language. The World Bank advised reconsidering the nation's teaching language after these challenges. After reviewing these ideas, the government reintroduced French and other languages as teaching languages. Arabic is taught in elementary and French in secondary [21]. French is used in most secondary and higher school economics and science classes. English and Spanish are communication languages in secondary school. Local language is usually abandoned and utilized exclusively for communication without literacy [21]. This strategy is flawed and unsuitable for India. It ignores the original language, favoring language speakers. Linguistic technique appears complicated. Secondary school students study English, Spanish, and French together, making language acquisition challenging [5].

Singapore had a similar dilemma. English is the main language of teaching in this Asian nation [19]. Teaching each student's native language as a second promotes inclusivity. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore made Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil official languages in 2024. The nation provides advanced native language proficiency for those who wish to study. This approach is more extensive but seldom used in India. School integration in Singapore is limited to four ethnicities. India has 705 ethnic groups, making assimilation difficult.

4. Criteria for Evaluate the Three-Language Formula

Indian educational imbalance is complex, and language policy, especially the three-language policy, is crucial. The 2020 Indian National education Policy retained the three-language formula and stressed state autonomy and flexibility in language education [20]. Two of the three languages must be Indian. Ray et al. advocate teaching fifth- and eighth-graders in their native language. The strategy combines regional students' native languages into the curriculum, reducing English's dominance in Indian education. Students from diverse languages may participate more in academic and daily activities. Native-language instruction may reduce dropout rates, particularly in rural and indigenous regions. Teachers teach pupils a regional native language, a Union official language (or secondary official language), and a contemporary Indian language not listed above [2]. According to neoliberal ideas of individual liberty in decision-making, this paradigm greatly expands students' language alternatives. In a culturally varied country like India, the policy allows pupils to select their preferred language [23]. Every state may adopt its people's and culture's languages. This empowers local government and supports neoliberal decentralization and personalized governance. Neoliberalism promotes competition to improve quality and efficiency [4]. Being bilingual at TLF may help students academically and professionally. Schools may compete to provide better language courses to attract a more varied student body, enhancing educational quality and results via market dynamics. Language education requires skilled instructors and sufficient teaching materials, making program implementation difficult. The unmodified three-language formula policy was assessed by Aggarwal. The formula did not encourage cultural identification or linguistic integration, he argued. The curriculum uses students' native languages to respect linguistic diversity and assure familiarity. Different language training methodologies and timetables may result in different approaches and results. Disconnecting policy goals from results worsens educational inequality. After a decade of policy change and progress, TLF enjoys increased digital education autonomy. However, implementing these rules is difficult. Teacher shortages, inadequate training, and a lack of local language teaching materials affect the implementation of the Teaching and Learning Framework (TLF) in different Indian states. This variance produces various educational outcomes [23].

5. Select a Specific Policy Alternative Based on Your Evidence, Criteria, and Local Context

The benefits and drawbacks of these three Indian policies should be considered. The Moroccan method poses a challenge because it disregards local languages and instead uses foreign ones. A lack of knowledge of Indian languages leads to preference. The appeal of the French method has been questionable since its inception. India has a greater number of spoken languages compared to Singapore. She provides assistance to Kenya. Prior to implementing advanced English, Kenya pursued three different approaches. The Indian three-language method is commendable. The country mandates the inclusion of three languages in its educational system, as indicated by its name. The local tongue should be the medium of instruction until the fifth grade. Kenyan pre-primary kids communicate in their mother tongues [8-9]. Fifth-grade students will acquire proficiency in two languages. In Hindi states, English should be the primary language. The primary language of the state should be Sanskrit, excluding Hindi. Kenya begins teaching basic English at the pre-primary level. Secondary schools should provide lessons in additional languages. English will supplant Hindi-speaking areas. States that do not primarily speak Hindi use the English language. In Kenya, Swahili is a widely spoken language. The students possess a proficient command of both English and Swahili.

The policy will have a significant influence on a large number of individuals [13]. Some may argue that it is inappropriate to replace native languages with English. Schools and Indian communities may overlook indigenous languages. This surgery may require financial resources. Limited resources may restrict participation [15]. Effective techniques have contributed to the success of new legal systems. Each country assigns varying levels of importance to three languages. Swahili was evaluated in Kenya but not taught. English is highly esteemed in India. Sheikh et al. support the objective nature of English as a foreign language. The show maintains impartiality and does not favor any particular party. Singaporeans choose to use English that is specific to their region. The curriculum for national

inclusion mandates the study of English.

6. Expected Policy Outcome

Kenya and Singapore's linguistic diversity and inclusion policies may affect schooling. Educational equality initiatives in this country may help multilingual India. Language learning in Kenya is slow. Familiar language aids early schooling in one's original language. English, which is neutral and useful internationally, replaces regional and ethnic languages in schools as students grow up. For national cohesiveness, schools teach Kiswahili, although it is not the main language. Kenya indicates that small language teaching adjustments may increase students' multilingualism, social and professional abilities, and local culture [17].

The language education in Singapore is excellent. Singapore's main language provides a modern, competitive environment. To preserve cultural history and linguistic variation, students learn their mother tongue (Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil) as a second language. Educational linguistic balance, pragmatism, and cultural values foster peace and diversity in Singapore. This clever solution solves multilingualism in tiny nations and inspires. Kenya and Singapore are trilingual like India. They teach pupils in their own languages. English and Hindi (or other native languages) were taught slowly. Giving equal attention to all languages encourages pupils to acquire many languages in a forward-thinking manner. Research shows that school language policies affect academic success, ethnic diversity, and social integration. Singapore and Kenya promote multilingual India's educational fairness and linguistic growth [22].

7. Trade tradeoff

Here are the Costs and disadvantages of bilingual schooling. New bilingual schools may require extensive teacher training, finance, and infrastructure. Bilingual education in India is uncommon and expensive. Teaching many languages costs time and money. Policies vary. The irregular execution of Indian state laws may impair multilingual education for underprivileged individuals and increase educational inequality. The heavy use of English and Hindi may marginalize local and ethnic minority people, denying them their cultural and linguistic rights and perhaps triggering disputes. India may not embrace language policy owing to its contentiousness. Indian language affects religion, culture, ethnicity, and communication. When making major language education reforms, officials should be vigilant to avoid political and societal turmoil. Significant changes may alarm Indian schools. To foster linguistic and cultural heterogeneity and educational justice, multilingual education policymakers must carefully examine trade-offs, develop effective implementation methods, and reduce social and cultural tensions.

8. Disadvantage

Multilingual education in India impacts politics, business, society, and practice. Culture, group membership, and interpersonal communication rely on language. All Indian language groups understand culture, history, and policy, says Bonvillain. Multilingualism worldwide may benefit minorities. Cultural and linguistic variety need careful national policy formulation to prevent regional or cultural opposition [25-26]. There are some political matters. Language initiatives are supported or opposed by Indian political parties based on their electoral regions and beliefs. Regions where Hindi is not the dominant language have resisted making it the national language due to concerns about sovereignty and cultural identity. Policy changes by politicians make continued education harder. Economic problems count. The multilingual education plan needs state or local financing for resources, teacher training, and school infrastructure. The Indian education budget should include infrastructure, teacher and student nutrition, and health. Linguistic variety may undermine society and education. Proper management and execution are essential. Effective multilingual education demands efficient and adaptable educational administration systems that can promptly respond to instructional requirements [6]. Ineffective and loose administration of Indian education may hinder

initiatives. In rural or poor areas, a lack of trained educators and modern teaching materials and methodologies may effect multilingual education policy. India's multilingual education policies foster cultural variety and social integration despite social, political, economic, and administrative hurdles. This made India's multilingual education proposal untenable and will not be executed.

9. Conclusion

Kenya and Singapore's language policy may help India promote multilingualism. Under the National Schooling Policy 2020, India permits three languages in the curriculum up to fifth grade, including the student's native tongue. Reduced funding and poor regulation have hurt efforts to reduce dropout rates and educate multilingual students. Kenya and Singapore have prospered in multilingual education. Kenya's preschool curriculum emphasizes regional languages and gradually introduces English. By teaching English and the native language as secondary languages, Singapore successfully incorporates linguistic diversity into its education system. India should adopt Kenya's innovative language learning policy and Singapore's superb bilingual education model to build a trilingual policy that promotes linguistic variety, social harmony, and cultural preservation via education. This rule demands qualified teachers and necessary resources. Indian trilingual education may increase linguistic fairness and educational equality by overcoming hurdles and adopting global values.

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