

Employment Opportunities On Regional Languages Education Of India: An In-Depth Policy-Politics Analysis For Odia Language

Rudranarayan Mohapatra' Bikash Kumar Pal

*P.G. Department Of Odia, Utkal University,
Vani Vihar, Bhubaneswar-751004*

Abstract:

Since India's independence till now, governments of different ideology have come into power and have enacted various policies on the education of regional languages in India. But regrettably, the pedagogy of language education in India has been confined within the vernacular language learning at the school level and literary studies at the college and university level. The students of regional languages including Odia language are considered inferior in the pragmatic level compared to international and national languages learners like English and Hindi especially in employment sector due to less expressive power in other National and Foreign languages like English. Even if it is not in the pen & papers, it becomes clear if we come down to the ground level and analyze the various situations. Again, over the years, the syllabi in curriculum development have not been able to meet the needs of the present age. Students studying Odia languages and literatures today feel backward in terms of technological direction, multilingual skills, and market demand unlike other regional language learners. Due to their inability to express themselves in languages like English and Hindi, despite their knowledge of other things, their employment opportunities are shrinking, mainly in the private sectors. Therefore, this research article attempts to uncover the geographical, political and social constraints and policy discourse for willpower in Odia language learning from a historical perspective and to present possible solutions.

Keywords: *Regional Language, New Education Policy (NEP), Employment Market, Pedagogy, Vernacular language, Mother Tongue*

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I. Introduction:

Since the last education policy in the country since 1986 till now, it has become a matter of concern that language education in the country, except for the government sector, cannot create promising employment opportunities in the private sector. Especially if we look at the urgent call by the central government to implement the National Education Policy 2020, there is no evaluation process in the new education policy of what kind of progress has been made in the field of language and literature education in nearly 34 years since the last education policy was enacted. Current Education policy is mostly silent on the aspects of students' disinterest or underrepresentation in learning regional languages and literatures from past educational policies efforts. Again, from a different point of view, the number of Odia speakers unlike other regional language speakers in the country is gradually decreasing at proportionate. An at the same time, due to the political-social reasons of various regions, the Odia language is getting weaker and its commercial, political and economic areas are shrinking due to the departure from the emotional aspect of Southern part of Odisha and Sambaluri etc. Therefore, in accordance with the current new educational policy, how to create wide employment opportunities for other regional languages of India, such as Odia, in the future, in both private and public sectors, and how to promote regional language learners more, that is the purpose of this research studies.

II. Historical Background From Inception To Independence:

Establishing education system in India for trading and Profit making by East India Company to till date of developing NEP for opening the new scope of employment, engagement and preservation of Indian Language and cultural resource and heritage of making an aura of Indian Knowledge system is a long path. As analysing, the 'Local Vernacular Education (Year 1798)', vide regulation dated 21.Dec 1798 on civil servant devoid of knowledge of the native language of India would be eligible for Govt. jobs from 1st January 1800 (Mohanty, 2002). British Govt. took the initiative for introduction of the then Missionary education in the form of English Education in Odisha for their administrative convenience and to keep the people of Odisha to be

remaining silent for small employments and other facilities (Pattanaik, 2017). The first primary school was created in 1822 by missionaries and education was first being treated as a means of preaches of religion. This year British Govt. not feel even if to sanction a single rupee for the purpose of education to Odisha (Natabar Samantaray, P. 45). The first Odia school was established at Cuttack with only 80 students in the first four months, and the number of schools subsequently increased to 15 by the end of 1823, where out of total 368 students, 63 were girls) and developed an educated as a new upper-middle class “Indian in blood and colour but English taste (Pattanaik, 2017)”. Subsequently, Lord Macaulay’s Education Policy (1835) attempt to create an upper class of English speaking society completely neglecting vernacular schools.

In contrast, Woods Despatch (1854) reviewed the then education system and progress of education system developed by region language (Pattanaik, 2017) and recommended the education for brilliant students in English and for other education should be in Indian Languages (Nayak, n.d.). It contained the first comprehensive plan for the spread of education in India and systematized the educational hierarchy from Primary to University level (Chand, 2015) and encourages the Anglo-Vernacular education (Panigrahi and Pal, 2018). From here Odia language as a means of taught at bottom vernacular primary school (local language school) and up to middle class at district Anglo-vernacular school.

The ‘Hunter Commission of Education-1882’ had placed emphasis on the College and University education and as result the primary and high school education remained neglected (Chand, n.d.). Further this commission’s recommendation that the medium of instruction for secondary schools would be English and for primary schools it would be Indian languages, obstacles for the growth of Indian languages in Academic sphere. Followed by Indian Education Act–1904 and Resolution on Education Policy-1913 (21st Feb 1913) provisioned to pass the middle vernacular examinations and undergo training for obtaining teaching job (Radhik Kapur) not change the faith of vernacular languages including Odia being under evaluated. The Hartog Committee-1929, Zakir Hussain Committee-1937, Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) in 1938 and Sergeant Commission (1944) again emphasize the medium of instruction should be vernacular on Indian languages (Rajni, 2021). Wardha scheme of basic Education-1937, P-1(VIII) express that the “Learning English education made a gap among English educated and the ignorant masses in 1937” (Sahoo et al., 2019) and it opens the path to establish an universal system of basic education throughout the country (Chand, n.d.). But only after almost one and half century struggle, i.e. after 1942, the British Govt. in India accepted the Indian language as first compulsory language in education and English as second compulsory language for secondary education. In higher education, English was continued as the medium of instruction (Sanikop and Nayak, n.d.). By independence of India (1947), the number of primary school was 6998 (Pattanaik, 2017).

III. Regional Language Education Of Post-Independence Period:

As observed, the post-independence period Indian language education at higher level starts with University Education Commission (1948). By this commission’s recommendation, in 1953, University Grants Commission (UGC) was constituted as the apex body on higher education by an act of the parliament (“(PDF) HISTORY AND MILESTONES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA,” n.d.). The commission also recommended that the study of national language in Devanagari script and English and regional language both at secondary and University stages (Sanikop and Nayak, n.d.). Followed by the ‘Secondary Education Commission – (1952-53)’ recommended two language formula instead of three language formula of Radhakrishnan Commission and advised the state level facilities should be rendered to state language spoken in every state (Sanikop and Nayak, n.d.). However ‘Kothari Commission-1964-66’ and Ishwarbhai Patel Committee –1977 again recommended adopting of three language formula at state level and intended to promote a language of the Southern in Hindi Speaking states. It also recommended promoting Sanskrit as well as international language preferably English (Sanikop and Nayak, n.d.). In 1979, the study of Modern Indian language in addition to Hindi and English in Hindi speaking states are implemented as per National Policy of Education (NPE). Within 1986 to 1992, under the umbrella of NPE National Literacy Mission (1988), Minimum level of learning Programme (MLL, 1991), POA (1992), Sarva Sikhya Abhiyan (SSA, 2001), NAAC (1994), RUSA (2012) have supplemented language education many ways to the goal towards ‘Education for all’. However National Curriculum Framework (NCF) - 2005 envisages for language education and has mentioned that (i) Language teaching needs to be multilingual not only in terms of number of languages offered to children but also in terms of evolving strategies that would use the multilingual classroom as a resource; (ii) Home Language/Mother tongue of children should be the medium of learning in the school (Mahendra Mishra, 2019 (“19-Multilingual Education in Orissa.pdf,” n.d.)). It also comments the authentic place of mother tongue in educational domain is not meant to be subtractive but additive which fosters healthy multilingualism and ensures growth of all language (Mishra, 2019). Even the NPE-2016 endorsed the revision of No detention policy, promotion of Sanskrit and inculcation of values through education, regularity and punctuality in schools, cleanliness, self-control, industriousness and a spirit of entrepreneurship is become silent about the scope and growth of employability in Regional languages both at Private and Govt. sectors.

It can be well observed that from independence of India to till date nowhere it was assessed that the scope of employment of Indian Languages except Hindi and this gap ultimately reduce the enrolment and attendance of pupil in the regional language classrooms including Odia language. Further the English (International) and Hindi (National) level psychic dominance thinking always maintains a gap from Regional or Tribal Language and/or not wins the trust of regional language speakers that the learning through Home language will open wider Employment scope for their future. Again, 'the continuance of English medium in education concurrently at school level and near exclusively at college level defeats the policy goal of nation building with equal educational opportunities for all' (Lin and Martin, 2005). Therefore by and large, the attraction towards home or regional languages education including the Odia language becomes shrinking as proportionate to scope of employability. And irrespective of treating home language (Odia) as first language in Non-Hindi speaking states (including Odisha) in pen and paper, at ground, the home-language treated as a third language at national level further complexion this gradually decreasing of regional language education and employability.

IV. NEP-2020, The Hope Of Aspiration For Language Education:

NEP-2020 first ever defines education is the key factor in bringing national unity is a multilingual nation like India, and also is a good way of maintaining multilingualism and national unity. It aims to promote the preservation and development of all Indian language by protecting and promoting their use in various level of education with a legal framework. It also emphasize to consider mother tongue as the medium of education at the primary level keeping in mind inclusion of vernacular in education will give new life to the endangered language and will help to keep children connected to their culture. NEP focused on promoting multilingualism in teaching and learning and enhancing the power of language. It also provisioned to give special attention to employing local teachers or those familiarities with local languages to meet the educational needs of the local students especially in the high dropout regions (Sanikop and Nayak, n.d.). But the reason of dropout is not being addressed or the draft of NEP-2020 remains silent. However, this is a matter of assurance that the NEP made provisions for preparing high-quality bilingual textbooks and teaching materials for science and Mathematics, so that the learners are enabled to think and speak about the two subjects both in their language and/or home languages and English including classical status languages of India.

V. Employment Market Of Regional Languages And The Status Of Learners:

We are currently in a market that favours job seekers with companies fighting for talent and willing to offer competitive salaries and other benefits. "India has 22 constitutionally recognized languages and 11 scripts, as well as more than 120 languages with at least 10,000 speakers each. As per a study by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), only around 125 million out of the total 1.35 billion Indians people know English. To reach out to Indians who are conformable in non-English languages and tap their vast market, regional language expertise is imperative. Regional language literacy is a big draw in the current job market, with applications spanning targeted software development to content creation. At present from sales and marketing, to translation and content development, to software tools and human machine interface systems in regional languages expertise has many takers" (July 20, 2019; <https://indbiz.gov.in/>). With this, there are an increasing percentage of users from metros like Delhi-NCR and Mumbai being more comfortable in looking for a job in a language other than English and tier-II cities are more likely to choose a vernacular language to enable their job search (The Economics Times, 2nd Dec 2021). And 70 per cent of internet users find local language digital content to be more reliable than English language content. As a result, digital marketers with knowledge of a vernacular language find tons of job opportunities (July 20, 2019; <https://indbiz.gov.in/>). However, it is not more to say after almost eighty years of independence our language education system has not produce as desired regional language multiskilling specialist those become viable in competence as per the job market need.

As analysing the Odia language and literature programme and their syllabus including the students' portfolio, it is observed that the present language programme more inclined to area of humanities and cultural studies rather than opening of the scope of skill and/or entrepreneur oriented having business or administrative value. Starting with Odia language as a subject in P.G. level at Ravenshaw University from 1946, followed by Viswa-Varati, Santiniketan (from 1951) as one of the oldest learning centre of Odia language and literature, P.G Department of Odia at Sambalpur University from 1968, at Utkal University from 1969, at Berhampur University from 1967, at Fakir Mohan University from 1999, at Central University of Odisha from 2013-14, at Gangadhar Meher University from 2015, and other colleges and universities of Odisha mostly syllabus are confined to Philology, folk literature, Comparative literature including ancient, medieval and modern Odia literature and literary theories. The syllabus are neither connecting to present need of industry, business and entrepreneurship nor attracting present youngsters' aspiration of start-ups. What is the reason behind this? Ultimately the answers will be many such as (a) The mother tongue of the linguistic minorities in the states does

not find a place in the three language formula, (b) less political bargaining power of linguistic minorities, (c) “The minorities in the states have economic motivation to learn the regional language of the state they live in and they are willing to learn it when there is no cost to their cultural and political interests. But the rigidity of Three-Language Formula does not provide for the minorities to learn both their language and the official language of the state”(Lin and Martin, 2005). It is point to be noted here that the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sanghathan of India have only provisional provision of appointment of Contract teacher or temporary teacher of regional teacher as of the need basis only. This is neither linking with student’s performance, so most learners are not serious to this. In contrast, “the students in Hindi states do not have the economic motivation to learn another Indian language. Any economic opportunity in other states for them is likely to be available because of their knowledge of English rather than their knowledge of regional languages. This is owing to the nature of the job market and the place of English in it”(Lin and Martin, 2005). Again looking to the flip-flop of politicized policy, Hindi neither replace English within the time frame given by constitution but continued as the additional official language in non-Hindi speaking states and gradually shrinks the job market and regional language learner inspiration. With this the soft power and economic ideology of English have also improved its political desirability and forced regional language speakers to be shifted. Further this compromised/customized language learning environment also many folds at the Pedagogic designing level considering English as the Second Language (ESL) instead as foreign language (EFL). So the greatest challenge for New Education Policy-2020 is to place the choice of Regional language at first place form primary to University level both in academic, administration and cultural practice delivering education is in combining inculcation of self-pride with self-criticism, of cultural rootedness with cosmopolitanism, and of modernization with tradition.

VI. Conclusion:

Therefore to overcome the challenges to fill the gap between employment opportunities and pedagogical desirability for Regional language education including Odia language that to be address in NEP-2020 are be administrative and bureaucratic inertia; to cross over the faculty resistance to change themselves to instruct learning subjects in regional languages; fulfilling resource constraints on teaching and learning limited pedagogical materials; to make consensus about the purposes and nature of the proficiency examination; overcoming disagreements among teachers about the role and purpose of assessment; opening employment opportunities to win the confidence of student motivation; crossing limited opportunities for teacher professional development; and trained them to taught in home language to learners including national level languages. The actual policy to think over to address each community from the ground up, with sensitivity to different interests and aspirations, to bridge between English and home language, Individuality and community aspiration, preservation and modernization so that a student from a regional language community can learn English and dominant discourses without neglecting proficiency in the indigenous languages such as Odia.

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