

Assignment: Language in Education

Topic: Medium of Instruction in Bilingual /Multilingual Communities

Group 2: Roll no. 3, 27, 29, 30

Introduction

Medium of instruction plays vital role in imparting quality education. This study analyses the issue of medium of instruction in Pakistan. It critically presents review of language policies in Pakistan and discusses role of language planning and bilingual education in the context of education in Pakistan. This study found that medium of instruction is politically handled in Pakistan. Furthermore, it was also found that there is gap in the educational policies and the international research. Bilingual education is widely recognized as a standard way to cater to the educational needs and address the issues related to status of languages in the multilingual countries. Pakistan has been facing challenges related to medium of instruction since its inception in 1947. Educational policies, education commissions and education plans have been made to achieve educational targets but the objectives have not yet been achieved mainly because of unresolved issue of medium of instruction. In this regard Pakistan can learn a lesson from the experiences of North America, Kenya, Canada, South Africa and other countries.

Bilingual Education in North America:

North American educational practice seems to be one of the references of the early practice of bilingual education. Educating minorities by teaching those English is generally perceived as bilingual education in United States . There are multi-cultures and multi-languages in U.S that poses threats to face the challenges of multilingualism despite its homogeneous linguistic profile. There is equal status of English and French in Canada so implementation of bilingual education is in a different way keeping in view of different socio-political dynamics in Canada. There are positive results of bilingual education especially in French immersion program in Canada and it attracts most of the children from middle class.

Bilingual Education in South Africa:

We can take the example of South Africa for understanding issues related to medium of instruction in Pakistan because South Africa has 11 official languages. People have constitutional right to opt for medium of instruction for the education of their children but most of the parents go for English as medium of instruction in South Africa . Parents are more incline to get their children educated in English because it is linked to current capitalist economic system .The importance of English as the language of prestige and intelligence cannot be denied in comparison with mother tongue. Setswana and English are official languages of Botswana but English only was made the language of instruction from grade 4 and “there was absolute silence on the role of other languages in building national unity”

Bilingual Education in Nigeria:

Issues related to medium of instruction in Nigeria are not different than those in Pakistan. There are 400 indigenous languages in Nigeria and three exogenous languages: English, French, and Arabic. Mother

tongue education is still a debate. There are people with two different ideologies: one preferring linguistic pluralism and the other is vernacularization. Mother tongue education policy is supported on the basis of its benefits.

MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION ISSUE IN PAKISTAN

Linguistic diversity is beauty of Pakistan but politician used language as a tool to suppress or surpass some groups. Mother tongue education in the early years of education of a child is the born right of an individual and language of dream and meditation is mother tongue of an individual. Language is a learning gateway of an individual to the conscious world but language is weaponized and polarized to widen the gap between “Have” and “Have not” in Pakistan. Educational policies in Pakistan treated issues related languages in embedded manner. Their decisions were pre occupied with the spirit of Islam and Urdu which created linguistic and cultural conflict among other minor groups. Bengali Language Movement in 1948 and language conflicts in 1971 & 1972 culminated in the divorce of one part of Pakistan. Sindhi-Mohajir conflict was created on the name of languages which resulted in the riots (Rahman, 1997).

Had there been clear language policy in the form of bilingual theory, there would not have been such deteriorating educational conditions in Pakistan. Imposing Urdu, Arabic, Chinese and English in order to achieve political pursuit, and sidelining mother tongue i.e. Sindhi, Siraiki, Punjabi, Pashto or Balochi in Pakistan, have played havoc with education system. Why there cannot be mother tongue and second language in Pakistan like North America, Nigeria, Kenya, Canada other countries of the world. Bilingual education safeguards the right to mother education in the early years of education and provides solid footing for second languages like English or Urdu.

Global Education Monitoring Report of UNESCO (2016) issued policy paper that mentioned the importance of mother tongue education. It said that mother tongue education should be given importance in educational policies and children should be taught in a language they understand and the same language should be used in the classroom in the early six years of education. There are 423421 primary schools in Sindh where 2802824 students are enrolled. There are 67% private schools in Karachi, 53% in Hyderabad and 9-10% in the rural areas of Sindh. Medium of Instruction in government schools in mostly Sindhi or Urdu but there are most of the private schools in English medium. There is no one model to address the grave issue of medium of instruction. People are more inclined to enroll their children in private schools where there is English medium education from beginning. The huge divide into the media of instruction between private and government schools have created issues which can be addressed by implementing research based successful models of bilingualism.

CONCLUSIONS

Pakistan is the land with multi-ethnic groups. There are linguistic, social, and cultural diverse groups that owe to their respective identity. “Imposing a dominant language through a school system has frequently been source of grievance linked to wider issues of social cultural inequality” (Global Education Monitoring Report, (2016). Pakistan has already borne the fruits of linguistic conflicts in the country. It is time to review language policy and launch additive bilingual education which is likely to address the grievances of all stake holders in the country. It will recognize mother tongue education in the early years education of child and later to second language i.e. English in order to avail opportunities of the world.