



Mother Tongue as Medium for Teaching in Schools of Nagaland: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes the importance of preserving the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of India. The policy highlights that language is a powerful means of transmitting knowledge, values, and culture. In addition to promoting multilingualism and language diversity, the NEP also seeks to preserve the cultural heritage of different regions and languages. In a multilingual state like Nagaland, a state in the northeastern part of India, various dialects are spoken, and each dialect has its unique cultural significance. Nagaland is home to over 15 different regional mother tongue languages, making it a linguistically diverse state. The introduction of mother tongue language teaching would require significant resources and efforts to develop curriculum, materials, and trained teachers for each language. The objective of this research paper is to investigate the potential benefits of mother tongue as the medium of instruction for schools in Nagaland, in line with the NEP 2020, and suggest some ways forward for its implementation. Findings show that there is shortage of trained teachers, infrastructure, and funding to support the implementation of mother tongue language teaching. Standardizing the curricula and materials can also be challenging as there are variations in the dialects and scripts of each language, which may lead to discrepancies in teaching and learning across different regions. The study also shows a preference for English or other dominant languages over the mother tongue language among some stakeholders. This could result in resistance to the introduction of mother tongue language teaching and a lack of interest among students to learn their own language. The findings of this research will help policymakers and educators in Nagaland to improve and enhance the proper implementation of the mother tongue teaching learning process in schools, and ensure the holistic development of students, while preserving their cultural heritage.

Keywords

Mother Tongue Education, Multilingual, Nagaland, Mother Tongue teaching and learning.

Introduction:

Language plays a vital role in shaping a person's identity, and it is an essential tool for communication and education. The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India also recognizes the importance of mother tongue-based education. The policy states that wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably until Grade 8 and beyond, will be the mother tongue or local language. The NEP

2020 recognizes that children learn best when they are taught in a language they understand and are familiar with, which is often their mother tongue. Teaching in the mother tongue can help to ensure that students have a strong foundation in their language skills and can help to improve learning outcomes. Furthermore, the NEP 2020 highlights the importance of multilingualism and encourages schools to provide students with opportunities to learn multiple languages. The policy states that all students should be given the opportunity to learn at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue, with one of the languages being English. The NEP 2020 aims to promote a diverse and inclusive education system that celebrates the linguistic and cultural diversity of India.

The aim of this qualitative paper is to explore the potential benefits of mother tongue education in Nagaland and to suggest ways to implement it. The paper examined the current state of education in Nagaland and the challenges faced by students due to the language barrier. The research also analyzed the impact of mother tongue education on academic achievement and cognitive development. This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the potential benefits of mother tongue education in Nagaland and to suggest the way ahead for its implementation. Jami (2022) conducted a qualitative research on the “Scope and Challenges of Introducing Mother Tongue Language as a Medium of Instruction upto Preparatory Stage in Reference to Nagaland”. The study found that in order to implement mother tongue in teaching, the state need to adopt certain measures so that the community are aware about the importance of learning in mother tongue.

Furthermore, a webinar was organized by the English department of Dimapur Government College on the topic: Multilingualism in Nagaland: Meeting the challenges vis-à-vis the NEP 2020. The expert researchers discussed on the implementation of mother tongue in teaching and concluded that due to Nagaland being a multi-ethnic and multilingual state, the recommendation of NEP 2020 regarding teaching and learning of mother tongue will pose major issues. According to Deb, P. J. (2021), education is tightly intertwined with language, and people can learn by utilizing their preferred languages. However, reading and writing must be done in the student’s’ native language, and the language must be approved by the pupils. Thus, after reviewing research papers, the researcher asserts that the mother tongue is a necessity for optimal learning to continue. Singh, J. R. (2014) stated that the availability of learner-support materials (LSM) and class size pose the biggest challenge, as well as teacher shortages. This study makes the following recommendations: mother-tongue instruction must be approached and funded systemically, learner support materials must be developed before the implementation of such a system, and school facilities should be standardized to minimize demand for well-resourced schools.

A case study was also conducted by UNESCO Bangkok to improve the Quality of mother Tongue-based Literacy and Learning. The study found that it is still ideal to utilize first language (L1) as a foundation for language and literacy development, and that children typically require 5 to 7 years of second language (L2) instruction before they can learn academic subjects exclusively through this language. The most effective bilingual schools invest in L1 learning and thinking for as long as possible, creating an L2 word bank for each topic, and teaching the mother tongue as a subject all through school education. The most positive results will be for students who use the L1 as a subject and as a medium of instruction simultaneously with L2 acquisition. The study by Benson (2005) revealed that mother-tongue-based bilingual programmes

utilize the learner's first language, often known as L1, and indicated that the second or foreign language, often known as the L2, should be taught consistently so that students may progressively transfer their competencies from their native language to the foreign language.

Lopez et. al. (2020) explored the obstacles faced by educators in teaching the mother tongue and its influence on the learning capacity of students. The outcome of the paper revealed that Mother Tongue books and instructional materials had the greatest points in terms of Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education difficulties. However, the lack of mother language instructional materials is one of the highlighted dangers. The study by Cabansag (2016) explored the stakeholders' views on the implementation of MTB-MLE (Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education) as a teaching strategy. The findings of this paper showed that implementation of MTB-MLE has four primary benefits: enhanced concept articulation, increased self-confidence, enhanced retention, and the promotion of a pleasant atmosphere.

Maisuangdibou (2020) conducted a contextual analysis and library research to analyze the current education system in Northeast India and NEP 2020. The study found that the "three-language formula" is an imposition and a burden for those whose home tongue or local/community languages are still unofficially unrecognized, and that the policy does not address the need for equitable education.

Overall, introducing mother tongue language teaching in a multilingual place like Nagaland would require significant planning, resources, and collaboration with local communities and stakeholders to overcome the complexities and ensure the success of the program.

Objective of the study:

1. To study the ground realities of its actual implementation process.
2. To study the challenges the stakeholders may face whilst implementing mother tongue in teaching and learning in a multilingual state like Nagaland.
3. To study the best way forward considering the views of all the stakeholders.

Methodology:

Qualitative research method was adopted in this research to study mother tongue education in Nagaland. The researcher used in-depth analysis to gain insights of the usage of mother tongue in teaching and learning in a multilingual state like Nagaland where over 15 mother tongues are spoken based on the 2011 census data.

Results:

The implementation of mother tongue in teaching and learning in a multilingual state like Nagaland face several challenges for the stakeholders involved. Some of the challenges are:

- Language diversity: Nagaland is a multilingual state, with over 15 different languages and dialects spoken. This presents a challenge in implementing mother tongue education, as it would require a different curriculum for each language. This can be a significant challenge for the government, which would need to provide adequate resources to create and implement the necessary curriculum.

- **Lack of standardization:** Another challenge that stakeholders may face is the lack of standardization of the various languages spoken in Nagaland. There may be variations in the dialects and scripts used by different communities, which can make it difficult to develop a standardized curriculum. This can lead to confusion among the stakeholders, and could hinder the effectiveness of mother tongue education.
- **Parental preferences:** Parental preferences can also be a challenge in implementing mother tongue education. Some parents may prefer their children to be taught in a language that they believe would give them an advantage in their future careers. This can lead to resistance to mother tongue education, as some parents may view it as a hindrance to their children's' future prospects.
- **Economic constraints:** The implementation of mother tongue education can be expensive, as it requires the development of new curriculum materials and teacher training programs. In a state like Nagaland, which has limited financial resources, this can be a significant challenge for the government.
- **Limited resources:** The implementation of mother tongue education requires significant resources, including the development of curriculum materials, teacher training, and the provision of instructional resources such as textbooks and learning aids. Nagaland is a resource-limited state, and the government may struggle to allocate sufficient resources to support the implementation of mother tongue education.
- **Lack of qualified teachers:** To effectively implement mother tongue education, it is necessary to have qualified teachers who are fluent in the local languages and dialects. However, there may be a shortage of qualified teachers who are able to teach in the various languages spoken in Nagaland. This can lead to a lack of quality instruction and a diminished impact of mother tongue education.
- **Resistance to change:** Some stakeholders, including parents, teachers, and community leaders, may be resistant to the implementation of mother tongue education. They may believe that it is not relevant to the needs of students in Nagaland or necessary or relevant to the modern world. Overcoming this resistance will require careful communication and education campaigns to explain the benefits of mother tongue education. This resistance can hinder the successful implementation of mother tongue education.
- **Standardization of local languages:** Nagaland is a linguistically diverse state, with over 15 different languages and dialects spoken. However, there may be variations in the dialects and scripts used by different communities, making it challenging to develop a standardized curriculum. This can lead to confusion among students and teachers and hinder the effective implementation of mother tongue education.
- **Assessment and certification:** Assessing and certifying students who are receiving mother tongue education may pose a challenge. There may not be standardized assessments or certification procedures available for local languages, which can hinder the ability of students to continue their education beyond the primary level.

Mother tongue education can have a significant impact on the academic achievement and cognitive development of students in Nagaland. Here are some ways in which mother tongue education can be beneficial:

- **Improved academic achievement:** When students are taught in their mother tongue, they are more likely to understand the concepts being taught. This can lead to better academic performance, as students are

better able to comprehend and engage with the curriculum. Studies have shown that students who receive mother tongue education perform better on standardized tests.

- **Increased confidence and self-esteem:** Learning in one's mother tongue can increase a student's confidence and self-esteem, as they are able to express themselves more effectively. This can lead to a positive attitude towards learning and a greater sense of identity and belonging.
- **Improved cognitive development:** Learning in one's mother tongue can also lead to improved cognitive development, as students are able to think more critically and creatively. This is because they are able to access and understand complex ideas and concepts more easily, leading to greater intellectual growth and development.
- **Preservation of culture and identity:** Mother tongue education can help preserve the unique cultural identity of Nagaland's different communities. It helps to promote the use of local languages and dialects, which can be beneficial in maintaining cultural diversity and promoting a sense of pride and belonging among students.
- **Enhanced communication skills:** Mother tongue education can also help students develop better communication skills. As they learn to communicate effectively in their mother tongue, they are better able to transfer those skills to other languages, which can be beneficial in a multilingual state like Nagaland.

Suggestions for meeting the challenges:

The shortage of trained teachers in Nagaland for the implementation of mother tongue education is a pressing issue. Mother tongue education is important for preserving cultural heritage, promoting linguistic diversity, and facilitating effective learning. However, without trained teachers who can teach in the local language, it becomes challenging to implement this type of education. There are several possible ways to address this issue. One approach could be to provide more training opportunities for teachers to learn how to teach in local languages. This could involve workshops, seminars, and other forms of professional development. Additionally, incentives such as higher pay or career advancement could be offered to teachers who are willing to take on the challenge of teaching in local languages. Another approach could be to recruit more teachers who are already fluent in the local language. This could involve hiring teachers from the local community or from nearby regions who are familiar with the language and culture. Recruiting and retaining more local teachers could also help to strengthen the connection between the community and the school. Finally, technology could also be used to support mother tongue education. Digital resources such as online courses, instructional videos, and interactive learning tools could help to supplement the efforts of teachers and provide additional support for students.

Furthermore, Jami (2022) also states that there is a preference for English language or other dominant languages over teaching and learning in mother tongue in Nagaland. This preference may be due to several factors, including the perception that English is necessary for success in today's globalized world, the influence of Western education systems, and the belief that mother tongue education is not as valuable as education in a more widely spoken language. However, it is important to recognize the value and benefits of mother tongue education. Studies have shown that children who are taught in their mother tongue perform better academically and have a stronger sense of identity and cultural awareness. The National

Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India recognizes and seeks to integrate Indian knowledge systems (IKS) into the mainstream education system. The NEP 2020 defines IKS as a “network of diverse ideas, philosophies, beliefs, and practices that have been developed, accumulated, and refined over time within the geographical and cultural boundaries of the Indian subcontinent.” The policy emphasizes the need to preserve, promote, and develop IKS in various forms, including traditional arts, crafts, languages, and indigenous knowledge. It also calls for the integration of IKS with contemporary knowledge systems to foster an inclusive and holistic education that addresses the needs of the 21st century. Furthermore, mother tongue education can help to preserve linguistic and cultural diversity, which is important for maintaining a healthy and vibrant society. Therefore, it is crucial for educators and policymakers in Nagaland to recognize the importance of mother tongue education and work towards promoting and preserving indigenous languages. This may involve developing language programs that incorporate both the mother tongue and English or other dominant languages, as well as promoting the use of indigenous languages in the wider community. By doing so, Nagaland can ensure that its cultural and linguistic heritage is preserved for future generations while also providing students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in an increasingly interconnected world.

Conclusions and Discussion:

The NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of mother tongue-based education and multilingualism for promoting inclusive and equitable education, improving learning outcomes, and preserving linguistic and cultural diversity in India. Mother tongue education can have a positive impact on the academic achievement and cognitive development of students in Nagaland. By promoting the use of local languages and dialects, it can help preserve cultural identity and promote a sense of pride and belonging among students. It can also lead to improved academic performance and better communication skills, which can be beneficial in both the academic and professional spheres. Furthermore, implementing mother tongue education in a multilingual state like Nagaland can be challenging due to the language diversity, lack of standardization, availability of teachers, parental preferences, economic constraints, and resistance to change. Overcoming these challenges will require the government to work closely with stakeholders and communities to develop effective solutions that meet the needs of all concerned. The successful implementation of mother tongue education in Nagaland requires a comprehensive approach that involves policymakers, educators, parents, and community leaders. Furthermore, addressing the shortage of trained teachers in Nagaland for mother tongue education will require a multi-faceted approach. By providing more training opportunities, recruiting more local teachers, and leveraging technology, it may be possible to overcome this challenge and promote the benefits of mother tongue education for students in Nagaland. Therefore, by following these recommendations and guidelines, policymakers and educators can enhance the quality of education, ensure the holistic development of students, and preserve the cultural heritage of local communities.

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