

Three-Language Policy vs State Autonomy

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Three-Language Policy vs State Autonomy: A Case from Maharashtra

Context:

The **Government of Maharashtra** has recently announced the **removal of the mandatory three-language policy** in schools.

Earlier, students in the state were required to study **Marathi, Hindi, and English** as compulsory subjects. This move is significant as it indicates a shift toward **greater autonomy for schools** in designing language curricula and aligns with the broader objectives of **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, which emphasizes **flexibility, regional relevance, and student-centric learning**.

Key Highlights of the Decision

- The earlier framework required schools to compulsorily teach **three languages** — **Marathi (regional language)**, **Hindi (national link language)**, and **English (global link language)**.
- Under the new policy:
 - The **three-language rule is no longer mandatory** in Maharashtra.
 - **Schools now have the freedom** to select language subjects as per their **respective board's guidelines** (e.g., State Board, CBSE, ICSE, IB) and **student needs or preferences**.
- The move is aimed at:
 - **Reducing the academic burden** on students.
 - Promoting **greater flexibility** and **contextual relevance** in school education.

- Allowing institutions to focus on **languages aligned with career aspirations**, cultural needs, and regional significance.
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Implications of the Policy Change

1. For Students:

- **Lighter academic load** with fewer mandatory language subjects.
- Increased ability to focus on:
 - **Foreign languages** (e.g., French, German, Spanish) for global opportunities.
 - **Regional or tribal languages**, preserving **local cultural identities**.
- Offers space for **skill-based learning** instead of compulsory rote learning in multiple languages.

2. For Schools:

- Need to **revise their language curriculum**, especially if following the State Board.
 - **Marathi may still remain a key language**, given its cultural and political importance in the state.
 - **English likely to retain prominence** due to its role in higher education, communication, and employment.
 - Possibility of diversifying offerings to include **international languages or local dialects**.
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Understanding the Three-Language Policy in India

What is it?

The **Three-Language Policy** is a linguistic framework introduced in post-independence India to:

- Promote **national integration** through language.

- Ensure **linguistic equity** between Hindi and non-Hindi speaking regions.
- Build **multilingual competence** among students.

Historical Timeline:

- First introduced in the **1968 National Policy on Education (NPE)**.
- Reiterated in the **1986 NPE** and further emphasized in the **National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)**.

Structure of the Policy:

- **In Hindi-speaking states:**

- **Hindi**
- **English**
- One modern Indian language (preferably from the South)

- **In non-Hindi-speaking states (like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu):**

- **Regional language** (e.g., Marathi, Tamil)
- **English**
- **Hindi** or another Indian language

Objective:

- Ensure that **at least two out of the three languages** are **native to India**.
 - Promote **cultural inclusivity, linguistic harmony, and educational balance** across regions.
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