

Mother Tongue-Based Education

Posted at: 07/06/2025

Mother Tongue-Based Education: Towards Inclusive and Effective Early Learning

Context:

The **Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)** has released new policy guidelines mandating **mother tongue-based instruction** at the **foundational and preparatory stages** of schooling.

- This initiative aligns with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and the **National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2023)**.
- The goal is to **promote multilingualism**, strengthen conceptual understanding, and improve retention through early education in the child's home language.
- Experts, however, caution against imposing the policy without **consultation**, calling for a **dialogue-driven** approach.

Evolution of Language Policy in Indian Education

Over the decades, multiple national committees and policies have highlighted the importance of education in the **mother tongue**, especially at the early stages.

Key milestones include:

- **Kothari Commission (1964-66)**
- **National Policy on Education (1968)**
- **Yashpal Committee (1993)**
- **National Curriculum Framework (2005)**

- **National Education Policy (2020)**
- **National Curriculum Framework (2023)**

Common thread:

All these documents have stressed the importance of **mother tongue-based early education** to improve **conceptual clarity, emotional security, and learning outcomes**.

Rationale for Mother Tongue-Based Instruction

1. Empirical Evidence:

- Research shows children taught in their mother tongue during early years show **better comprehension, critical thinking, and higher retention**.
- Teaching in an unfamiliar language can cause **cognitive disconnect** and hinder learning.

2. Cognitive and Emotional Benefits:

- Reduces **language anxiety** and improves **classroom participation**.
 - Bridges the gap between **home and school learning environments**.
-

Implementation Challenges

1. Teacher Preparedness:

- Most teachers are trained only in **Hindi or English**.
- Lack of exposure to **multilingual pedagogy** and **lesson planning** for multiple languages.

2. Administrative and Logistical Issues:

- Absence of **assessment frameworks** for multilingual classrooms.
- Shortage of **quality learning materials** in many **regional languages**.

- Need for a **culturally sensitive curriculum** tailored to local contexts.

3. Societal Perception:

- **English is seen as aspirational**, associated with upward mobility.
 - Parents and educators may perceive mother tongue instruction as **regressive** or misaligned with modern goals.
-

Concerns About Top-Down Policy Imposition

- The CBSE approach appears **directive**, lacking **grassroots consultation**.
 - Teachers, particularly in **urban English-medium schools**, feel **overburdened** due to lack of systemic support.
 - Schools with **diverse linguistic populations** face unique challenges in policy adoption.
 - There is an urgent need for **community engagement** and **localised planning**.
-

Recommendations and the Way Forward

1. Dialogue Over Diktat:

- The policy must be implemented gradually through **trust-building**, not compulsion.

2. Support for Teachers:

- Provide a **2-3 year transition period** for adaptation.
- Invest in **teacher training**, **multilingual resources**, and **language mapping tools**.

3. Curriculum and Assessment Reforms:

- Encourage the use of **oral narratives**, **local knowledge systems**, and **region-specific**

content.

- Introduce **flexible and inclusive assessment tools.**

4. Build Holistic Support Systems:

- Offer **pedagogical resources**, foster **community participation**, and introduce **systemic incentives.**
- Collaboration between **educators, parents, and policymakers** is essential.

Conclusion

- India's urban classrooms, especially in metros, reflect **linguistic diversity** with children speaking **Marathi, Tamil, Bengali**, and other regional languages.
- While **mother tongue-based education** supports the **NEP 2020 vision**, its success lies in **context-sensitive, inclusive, and gradually implemented** approaches.
- Schools must **balance linguistic inclusion with aspirations**, ensuring foundational learning is **equitable, effective, and culturally relevant.**

