

# ANALYSIS OF MULTILINGUALISM IN EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION FOR IMPLEMENTING THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY-2020 IN INDIAN CONTEXT

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## ***Abstract***

*Early childhood care and education contribute to an individual's success and are beneficial to both their family and society in general. These are the critical moments during the early stages of life when the child's physical and mental well-being undergoes development. Early Childhood Care and Education can foster the development of skills in youngsters. If the child receives adequate care, nutritional sustenance, a wholesome environment, high-quality education, and social protection during these critical periods, both the child's future and the well-being of society are ensured. A highly effective early childhood care and education system directly correlates with a child's smooth progression through primary and secondary education. Early childhood education fosters variety within society, as children serve as the bedrock for building an inclusive society.*

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Care and Education, Monolinguals, Bilingualism, Multilingualism, National Education Policy.

## **Introduction**

The period of early infancy is a crucial stage in a child's maturation and advancement. During this period, children acquire fundamental skills and talents that lay the foundation for their future. In order to ensure the future well-being of a kid, it is imperative that parents, caregivers, educators, and policymakers have a thorough understanding of all the stages of early childhood development with greater efficiency than ever before. Recognizing early childhood care and protection as a fundamental right is crucial at this time. Public and private institutions responsible for pre-school education should be obligated to provide a healthy and safe environment for children, with corresponding fundamental duties. Kumar, C. A., & Rajendran, K. K. (2020) stated that the

teacher performs the noble work of educating the young students into all aspects of life, like social moralization, enculturation and helps gaining the skills for earning their livelihood. By offering assistance for growth, promoting positive behaviors, and recognizing the intricate socio-economic elements that hinder the growth and development of young children, lawmakers, policymakers, and other stakeholders can establish a complete legal structure to safeguard the welfare of children.

According to UNESCO, “Early childhood care and education (ECCE), which addresses the period from birth to 8 years old, is important because it capitalizes on a period of rich brain development for children and, when it is of good quality, can help them achieve their full potential. It can lay the foundation for good health and nutrition, learning and educational success, social-emotional learning, and economic productivity throughout life.”

In the Indian setting, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) refers to the provision of care and education for children from birth to eight years of age. The primary goal of early childhood education is to cultivate the comprehensive development of a child's personality. Providing high-quality early childhood education has the ability to significantly influence the whole development of young children, including their physical, psychomotor, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects. This involves nurturing their linguistic abilities and encouraging the early development of literacy. According to Kumar C. A., (2025) mentioned every day, students face instructional and social issues within the classroom, at home, at colleges, and in their groups. Despite barriers and difficult situations, some college students can alter to problems and attain outstanding stages of educational success and because they agree with that proper learning is the end result of non-stop efforts and wonderful questioning.

A child should not be discriminated against on the basis of caste, religion, region, creed, disability, colour, race etc. And if this happens in the society, it will deprive the children of equal protection of the laws. That is why Article 15(3) casts both positive and negative duties on the State to protect the interests of children. Positive duty means that the state itself has to take positive measures and initiatives so that no one is discriminated against due to social inequalities. Under the Constitution of India, it is the responsibility of the state to remove the existing inequalities by bringing changes in the society. Further, the right against exploitation and discrimination, which is enforceable against private individuals as well, is part of a larger scheme of fundamental rights jurisprudence guaranteed under various articles such as Articles 15(2), 17, 23, 24 and 21 of the Indian Constitution. Article 39(f) obliges the state to provide opportunities to children to develop in a healthy manner and to ensure their dignity and freedom by protecting them from exploitation.

Earlier, under the original Article 45, it was the duty of the State to endeavor to provide, within ten years from the commencement of the Constitution, free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen years. Article 45 being part of the Directive Principles of State Policy is non-justiciable. But gradually the Supreme Court began to read Article 45 in a liberal construction of the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India and recognized the right to free and compulsory education as a fundamental right which is now justiciable.

The Supreme Court of India in *Mohini Jain v State of Karnataka* relied on a collective meaning of Articles 21, 38, Articles 39(a) and (b), 41 and 45 which mandate the State to provide free and compulsory education to all at all levels of the education system. The court observed that the “framers of the Constitution were aware that more than seventy per cent of the people, to whom they were giving the Constitution of India, were illiterate. They were also hopeful that within a period of ten years illiteracy would be wiped out from the country. It was with that hope that Articles 41 and 45 were brought in Chapter IV of the Constitution. An individual cannot be assured of human dignity unless his personality is developed and the only way to do that is to educate him.”

Evidence suggests that eliminating tuition fees has been one of the most important drivers of primary enrollment increases, particularly in low-income environments and where the rates of attending primary education are low (Kattan 2006). For example, a 2007 evaluation of 32 low-income countries that instituted school user fees as a component of the Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980s revealed that countries experienced increases in enrollment after eliminating these fees, and that countries with well-planned strategies of removing fees experienced little or no adverse effect on the quality of education (Nielsen 2009). Studies of individual countries find similar results. A year after Malawi introduced free primary education in 1994, enrollment rates increased 51%; in Burundi, which eliminated tuition in 2006, net primary school enrollment rose from 41% in 2000 to 94% in 2010 (UNICEF and the World Bank 2009; UN Statistics Division 2013). Eliminating fees may also reduce socioeconomic gaps in education access, suggesting school fees are particularly significant barriers for lower income families. In Uganda, for example, after fee abolition in 1997, the difference in primary school attendance rates between the bottom and the top quintiles decreased from 43 percentage points (46% versus 89%) in 1992 to just 11 percentage points (78% versus 89%) in 1997 (Deininger 2003). The vast majority of countries have legislated tuition-free school at the primary level, and just 15 nations have yet to make primary education free and compulsory (Heymann 2013; de Guzman Chorny et al. 2014).

## NEP-2020

The National Education Policy 2020 is the inaugural educational policy of the 21st century. The objective of the new education policy is to cultivate individuals who possess rational thinking and decisive behavior, along with qualities such as compassion, empathy, courage, resilience, scientific mindset, and creative imagination. Additionally, the policy aims to instill strong ethical principles and values. An important addition in the NEP is the emphasis on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). Early Childhood Care and Education has emerged as a priority in national policy discussions due to the understanding that promoting educational achievement and attainment should begin in the youngest years of schooling. Early Childhood Care and Education is a highly beneficial investment for a nation as it promotes the development of human resources, reduces gender disparity and enhances social cohesion. Additionally, it helps to decrease the expenses associated with remedial programs. Programs like these are crucial for disadvantaged children as they help to alleviate their difficulties and address educational disparities. ECCE, or Early Childhood Care and Education, is a crucial form of education that plays a critical role in an individual's overall development. It has the potential to have a considerable impact on both

the later stages of an individual's life and the progress of a nation. The primary objective of ECCE is to facilitate the optimal development and well-being of children.

Education is essential for realizing one's maximum capabilities, fostering a fair and impartial community, and advancing the progress of a nation. Ensuring widespread availability of high-quality education is crucial for India's ongoing progress and its position as a global leader in terms of economic development, social fairness, equality, scientific progress, national unity, and cultural conservation. The reference "(NEP, 2020)" is provided. Early childhood care and education (ECCE), which encompasses the time from birth to 8 years old, is vital due to its ability to capitalize on a period of substantial cognitive development in children. High-quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) can provide the basis for optimal physical and mental well-being, academic achievement, social and emotional growth, and long-term economic prosperity.

### **Language and NEP-2020**

Language acquisition is a crucial aspect of infant development. It enhances the child's capacity to communicate. Additionally, it enhances the child's capacity to articulate and comprehend emotions. Additionally, it enhances the child's cognitive skills and facilitates the cultivation and sustenance of interpersonal connections. The development of language forms the basis for the acquisition and advancement of reading and writing abilities in children as they begin and advance through their education. Language is essential for every facet of their education within the classroom as they interact with their peers and teachers, and throughout their life as they transition into adulthood. Acquiring language skills is extremely important for a child's future development, both in terms of their social interactions and their educational pursuits.

The development of language is intricately connected to a child's reading skills. Early literacy is intricately linked to the progression of language skills in young children during the preschool period. Prior to acquiring the ability to read and comprehend symbols, children develop the necessary cognitive abilities to comprehend the mechanics of language. Children lay the groundwork for language and literacy development by recognizing that speech follows patterns and symbols carry significance. Consequently, proficient language development is an essential component of subsequent success in reading.

Since communication is a crucial aspect of a child's growth, teaching them effective communication and language skills at an early age establishes the basis for their reading and writing abilities. Incorporating language development activities into early childhood education is crucial for promoting clear speech, accurate phonetics, and successful communication skills in children.

The connection between the two languages is inherent as, far before a kid has the ability to decipher words and identify symbols, they cultivate and refine the aptitude necessary to comprehend the mechanics of language. In addition, during the pre-eight age period, children establish the fundamental basis for language and literacy development by recognizing the systematic nature of speech and the significance of symbols. Consequently, proficient language development is an essential component of subsequent success in reading.

The prevalence of multilingual classrooms is increasing worldwide due to the significant rise in global mobility and migration. Within these classrooms, children may possess diverse linguistic and cultural origins,



maybe speaking one language in their household and another language in their educational setting, or acquiring the language of instruction as an additional language.

### **Advantages of Multilingualism in Education**

#### *Embracing Worldwide Opportunities: Opening the Door to Limitless Possibilities.*

In today's globalized society, persons who are fluent in multiple languages have a clear edge in the employment industry. Businesses and organizations are in search of individuals that possess the ability to effectively communicate with a wide range of clients and stakeholders in their respective mother tongues. Multilingualism in education is crucial since it provides individuals with access to international opportunities, allowing them to effortlessly work in other nations and make valuable contributions to global efforts. Facilitating communication across different languages promotes global cooperation, which in turn fuels advancements and creativity in several sectors.

#### *Enabling Cultural Exchange and Promoting Understanding: A Route to Harmony.*

Language and culture are closely connected, and being able to speak multiple languages helps facilitate the interchange of ideas and promotes better understanding across different cultures. Individuals who are fluent in multiple languages have the ability to connect and unite diverse populations, promoting harmonious cohabitation and cooperation. The capacity to establish linguistic and cultural connections with others is extremely valuable in fostering diplomatic partnerships and advancing global harmony. By embracing cultural diversity, they foster a more cohesive and accepting global community that values the richness of human diversity.

### **Advantages of Multilingual Education in India**

- **Enhancing Human Capital:**

Multilingual education enables learners to acquire the essential language skills and competences needed to engage in diverse areas of life, including education, employment, research, innovation, and more. Likewise, it has the potential to enhance their employment and mobility in the context of globalization.

- **Preserving Linguistic Diversity:**

Multilingual education can contribute to the conservation and rejuvenation of India's linguistic diversity and cultural legacy. Besides, it has the potential to advance the linguistic entitlements and honor of those who speak various languages, particularly those that are at risk of extinction or stigmatized.

- **Enhancing the cohesion of the nation:**

Multilingual education has the potential to promote mutual understanding and respect among individuals who speak different languages and come from diverse cultures. Also, it has the potential to augment social cohesion and foster harmony among the heterogeneous population of India.

- **Enhanced basis for acquiring proficiency in additional languages:**

Commencing school in one's native language establishes a strong basis for acquiring more languages, such as the official language and English, so fostering multilingualism.

- Increased rates of retention:

When students possess comprehension of the material being taught, they are more inclined to remain enrolled in school and successfully attain their education.

#### Suggestions for Promoting Multilingualism in Education

- Implementing a versatile and all-encompassing strategy:

Multilingual education should be customized to accommodate the specific requirements and circumstances of diverse learners and communities. The platform should encompass all languages and dialects spoken in India, including tribal languages, sign languages, classical languages, foreign languages, and so on, in order to be inclusive.

- Creating a progression of language acquisition:

Multilingual education should extend beyond the early years of schooling. It should be expanded across all levels of the educational system, starting from pre-primary school and continuing through higher education. Additionally, it should offer students the chance to acquire proficiency in other languages during their academic journey.

- Enhancing the proficiency of teachers:

Teachers have a vital role in providing multilingual education. Teachers should receive comprehensive training and support to ensure their effective instruction in many languages. Furthermore, it is important to promote the utilization of creative teaching methods and advanced technologies to improve the process of acquiring language skills.

- Fostering parental and community involvement:

Parents and communities have a crucial role in advocating for and supporting bilingual education. Parents should be educated about the advantages of multilingualism in relation to their children's growth and education. Furthermore, they ought to participate in decision-making processes pertaining to language policies and practices.

- Establishing a culture that promotes the use of several languages:

Multilingualism should be recognized and appreciated as a great resource for India's social and economic progress. It should be included into other facets of public life, including media, arts, sports, governance, and so on. It is important to acknowledge and provide incentives for excellence in different areas, including education, employment, research, and more.

#### Conclusion

Children possess an inherent capacity to acquire a language through their interactions with their family and broader community. The process of language learning generally begins with babbling, progresses to the use of single words, then advances to combining two words, and finally culminates in the development of sentences. The languages kids acquire contribute to the formation of their social identity. Studies have demonstrated that infants exposed to multiple languages can already distinguish between different languages as early as four months old, despite their native language not being fully formed

In nutshell, the inclusion of multilingualism education has become an essential asset of unparalleled value for the future of our young pupils in the continuously developing global world. At the early years, language development plays a crucial role, and introducing children to multiple languages at this period has numerous benefits for their overall development, cognitive abilities, and academic achievement. We will explore the advantages of multilingualism in school, analyzing its numerous benefits for early childhood development and highlighting its remarkable impact on nurturing individuals with a comprehensive understanding of the world.

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