



IN Focus

MOTHER TONGUE & MULTILINGUALISM

The **National Education Policy ('NEP') 2020**, is the third such policy formulated by the Central Government since Independence. Since its release in July 2020, the NEP, which proposes a major revamp of the Indian education system, has been subject to heated public debate. Among its key changes is the change in the **medium of instruction** in schools.

Let us take a look at what the policy proposes – in **paragraph 4.11**, the policy proposes: *“Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother-tongue/local language/regional language...This will be followed in both public and private schools.”*

Further in **paragraph 4.13** the policy states that: *“...the three-language formula will continue to be implemented...However, there will be a greater flexibility...and no language will be imposed on any State.”*

This focus on using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction is not new. The suggestion to use the ‘home language / mother-tongue’ as medium of instruction can be traced to the pre-constitution and

constitution-making eras. **The Nehru Report 1928**, in its Fundamental Rights section, sought to enable minorities to impart primary education in their own languages. **The Kothari Commission Report of 1966** first recommended that educational instruction should take place in mother tongues and local languages. **NPE 1968**, proposed the controversial **three language formula** that prioritized Hindi as the language of instruction, English as the second language, and either a “modern Indian language” or regional language as the third. **NEP 2020** reiterates the stance taken in previous education policies, with one difference: it **does NOT define the languages of instruction**, only making it clear that it will not be English. It uses the term **‘home language’** which, along with **‘mother tongue’**, remains undefined. However, the focus of mother tongue instruction is from the perspective of **improved learning outcomes**.

In this issue we share with you the views of the School Principal of a well-established metro school in Mumbai.

MULTILINGUALISM MYTHS

- **Multilingualism causes language delay** - There is no causal relationship between bilingualism and language delay. Bilingual children reach the same language milestones at the same time as monolingual children.
- **Multilinguals should develop literacy in one language first** - Children can learn to read and write in multiple languages. The success of bilingual education programmes is evidence that literacy in a first language is not essential for acquiring literacy in a second language.
- **Bilingual children have academic problems once they start school** - Research shows many academic advantages of being bilingual, including superior problem solving and multitasking skills, as well as increased cognitive flexibility.

“The limits of my language
mean the limits of my world.”

— Ludwig Wittgenstein

- **Parents who speak a language other than English to their children will hurt their children's chances for academic success** - It is best for parents to speak to their children in the language they are most fluent in. This could be the native language or a language the parents speak very well. If parents speak in a language they do not know well themselves, then they are providing a model for children of a language that is not fully developed.

QED Talk

NEP 2020's proposition to use MULTILINGUALISM

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■ **What is your overall response to the debate on multilingualism brought up through the NEP 2020 ?**

The NEP 2020 is an excellent forward looking education policy which intends to cover 250 million school going children, 8.5 million teachers in 1.5 million schools across the country. The policy therefore, has to be broad enough to cover a large cross section of the society across the country, bringing in more number of students to schools. Currently more than 50% of girl children do not enroll into school, and 50% of teenagers drop out at ages 16-18yrs. So, broadly speaking, bringing in a mother tongue into the school education is a MUST if we want to build a more inclusive society.

Implementation would need very large resources in terms of developing skilled and trained teachers, writing textbooks, reference material and infrastructure in schools. And, I feel the transition process could be time consuming, painstaking, but gainful for us.

■ **To what extent do you feel it would be easy for your school to identify a 'mother tongue' especially in a city like Mumbai ?**

As said before, a National policy needs to cover a large cross section of the country. So TIER – I , TIER – II & TIER – III cities including Mumbai would face immense hardship owing to its cosmopolitan nature. Using the mother tongue / state language may not benefit all equally, as there is a high possibility that the state language will override the mother tongue. This is the nature of the modern multi-cultural society.

■ **If imposed by the state education department for teaching bilingually in Marathi and English, how well equipped are you with the books, teaching aids and multilingual teachers till grade 5 or grade 8 ?**

Teaching in Marathi from class 1 to 8 will be a challenge, as new resources, teaching aids, books in Marathi and teachers who know Marathi Language very well, would have to be organized. Re-skilling the current teachers will not be an easy option as the local language may be new to many.

I am sure the government would be sensitive to this and give enough transition time.

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“A different language is a different vision of life.”

— Federico Fellin

■ **To what extent would multilingualism provide the knowledge of other languages in a class ?**

Students are adaptive and would definitely enjoy the benefits of multilingualism in class. However in any metropolis that has a cosmopolitan student body, the focus of the students and parents would be their future careers. They would therefore only focus on languages that give them immediate benefit for the pursuit of higher education.

■ **To what extent do you think multilingualism could erode the proficiency since children will end up switching between languages ?**

Multilingualism could potentially erode some amount of proficiency in a specific language, as the choice of language, the stress caused, and effort needed to learn and excel would be a matter of choice and liking for the student.

■ **As far as scientific and formal technology is concerned would it be easy to teach in any other language ?**

As far as technology goes the advent of AI has made translation easy. I am sure with time, the tools and aids for transition would be more user friendly and easy to handle, both for the teachers and students.

This should help us to transition easily into multilingualism even at classroom levels. I therefore believe that, technological advancements would make teaching in different languages much easier. However resources for taking this forward would be large, and hard to find.

■ **Would instruction vide multilingualism also demand assessment vide multilingualism ?**

While the assessment and the rubrics per se would remain the same, we would perhaps, need an additional assessment of multilingual proficiency.

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■ **If parents have chosen an English medium school for the children, to what extent would they have concerns over multilingualism ?**

They will have SERIOUS concerns as :

- 1) Their children will have to take up a language which is the state /regional language which they may not want to pursue in the long run.
- 2) It would increase the burden on the students and make life difficult for them. If they want to move to another state later for professional or personal reasons, it would not be easy.

■ **In today's day and age, which single language or at best 2 languages do you think would be beneficial in terms of presenting equal access and opportunity to students for anywhere in the country ?**

English and the Hindi are the two languages that could potentially unify our country. English also immensely helps in communicating across the world.

■ **Your closing remarks on this matter.**

A child learns best in his mother tongue so early childhood education could be in the mother tongue. However, as per the 2011 census, there are 52.83 crore speakers of Hindi. So, Hindi should definitely be taught as a common language. English is the window to the world so its importance cannot be ignored either.



READ TO SUCCEED

FOR TEACHERS

**SMALL TEACHING (2nd Ed.) -
Everyday lessons from the science of
Learning**

- by **James M Lang**

Organized into chapters with clear lists of actionable tasks, the book dives deeper into the theory and learning science. A useful book for teachers since it presents specific strategies teachers can use to improve their teaching practices, without majorly overhauling or rethinking a plan. Lang has experienced all of the learning practices he promotes (either as a teacher, a student, or an observer). The recommendations here are based around helping students retain information, build cognitive and memory networks, and increasing motivation.



FOR STUDENTS

AMMACHI'S AMAZING MACHINES

- by **Rajiv Eipe**

With simple action words and sound words this picture book, apt for 3-6 years old children, filled with adorable illustrations, shows us the use of simple machines at home to make our daily chores easier while highlighting the fun and loving bond between a child and a grandparent.

Resource allocation for implementation of NEP is a challenge and the uniformity of implementation would remain a major cause for concern. So while I agree that NEP is forward looking, the transition would be time consuming and need the support of all stake holders.

QED Feed

LEARNING BY DOING

*“For the things we have to learn
before we can do them,
we learn by doing them.”*

– Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* By Aristotle)

Whether you are learning to ride a bicycle, or to swim, or trying out a new recipe, it's necessary to actually DO these things rather than just read books about them or watch videos. Learning by doing is the process of learning through actions. **The man behind the term 'Learning by Doing' was the American philosopher, educator and social critic John Dewey**, who way back in 1887 wrote his first pedagogical article My Pedagogic Creed, and whose thoughts have since been known worldwide.

Learning by doing is an element of almost all major learning theories. It does not necessarily require any previous knowledge or understanding as students learn through **active participation** or **experimentation**. As a pedagogical approach it requires teachers to engage learners in hands-on, creative modes of learning. When it comes to introducing students to any new activity, this is one of the best ways to do so because they actually get a chance to understand its application.

There are many benefits to learning by doing such as **increased retention and clarity** about how something works. It helps **build skills and confidence** while **fostering an appreciation** of the world around us. If introduced from the early developmental years of a child, it can prove to be beneficial in **enhancing children's cognitive abilities and motor development**. It helps **foster creativity** and **critical thinking**. Not just that, it also **builds problem-solving skills** that stand the students in good stead later on. Learning by doing is increasingly being used in schools because we all agree that sitting alone or even as a group in a room and merely reading or listening

about new concepts is neither appealing nor effective. To really learn, students have to be **actively involved and engaged** with what they are learning. One of the biggest advantages of learning by doing is that we can **cater to differentiated learners**. When students get involved in an activity that engages different faculties of mind and body, irrespective of what kind of learners they are, they will find a connect.



We all view subjects like Science, Computer Science and even Math as practical subjects with their own laboratories and specialised equipment. Each week, there are certain periods allocated to lab work and certain ear-marked lab activities/experiments that students are expected to perform in each grade. The idea that ALL subjects can be viewed through the learning by doing lens is still nascent in our country. However, we as teachers know that where there is a will, there is always a way! Here is an example of how learning by doing can be incorporated in the Social Sciences. Moreover, it comes with the added advantage of subject integration.

Let us think of India's first war of independence (1857). Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi is one of the more popular historical figures and most children will have some prior knowledge about her. Now catering to differentiated learners and using the principle of learning by doing, the following activities can be carried out by groups of students in class:

- Students interested in literature can be asked to find stories and poems written about her in vernacular languages- for eg. the beautiful poem that pays tribute to her valour- Jhansi ki Rani by Subhadra Kumari Chauhan. They can compile all such literature they can find and make a presentation in class or make classroom displays.

Learning by Doing as a process involves 5 steps:

- **Experience** the activity by performing it
- **Share** the reactions and observations with the group
- **Process** and analyse the experience
- **Generalize** your learning to connect it with the real world and
- **Apply** what has been learned to a similar or different situation. These steps follow each other like an expanding spiral of learning and application.



RIB TICKLERS

Pre-primary children enjoy a different level of excitement, eagerness and competition to pick up and use new words, especially if they are unfamiliar, long and seem complex. During the "Get to Know your School" tour, Sr Kg kids were taken around the otherwise NO ENTRY zone of the management area. They were introduced to the Principal, Coordinators, receptionist, librarian, accountant, etc. A few weeks later, the school had a guest, and a Sr Kg child was requested to show the guest around and introduce key people to the guest. They soon arrived at the Coordinators room; the Coordinator just arriving after completing her rounds down the corridors. The child soon said, "And finally Ma'am, this is Shally Ma'am, she is the Corridor of our school."

- The ‘artists’ and ‘designers’ in the class can paint pictures of her as a queen and a warrior. They can design costume cut-outs and props for her (like sword, shield etc).
- The aspiring journalists can write a news report about how she is preparing to go into battle and some reporters can deliver a news report on the incidents leading up to her brave final fight.
- One student can be on the class “Hot Seat” as Rani Lakshmi Bai and the others can interview her. Even the students interviewing can depict different people- a minister/ courtier, one of her most trusted army commanders- Jhalkari Bai, a common man from Jhansi, a British official and anyone else the students can think of.

This is just one illustration of incorporating learning by doing in History. We are certain you have tried out similar activities with your students. We look forward to hearing from you about your classroom experiences so that we can share them with our larger teacher fraternity.

'MOTHER TONGUE'

Wonder Word

The only official definition of ‘**mother tongue**’ is the one used during the Census, which is: *“...the language spoken in childhood by the person’s mother to the person. If the mother died in infancy, the language mainly spoken in the person’s home in childhood will be the mother tongue. In case of doubt, the language mainly spoken in the household may be recorded.”*

A language also needs to be spoken by **more than 10,000 people** in order to qualify as a “**mother tongue**”, else it is classed as a minority language. This creates a clear demarcation between a mother tongue and a minority language, and if the definition used above is adopted, linguistic minorities are going to be left out. The 2011 Census reported that there were **19,500 different languages** and dialects spoken in India, although there are **far fewer ‘mother tongues’**.

MAGIC In The Class

STRATEGY for teaching MATHS

We all know that worksheets aren’t always the most ‘engaging’ way to reinforce concepts. For the kinesthetic learners, you need to be really innovative about making math a **DO and LEARN experience**. This involves finding real-life examples of formulas and concepts, or including student interests in relevant work problems. Strategies that encourage movement out of the seats or just engaging in hands-on learning activities can help a variety of different learners:

- Try a **beach ball toss** with equations written on each section or bake with your students to learn about fractions
- Math puzzles like **KenKen**, **Magic Squares** and **Tangram** can also help kinesthetic learners practice their skills
- **Writing and acting out skits** about math concepts
- A **scavenger hunt** for geometric shapes or patterns
- **Brain breaks** to help students stay focused during long stretches of class
- **Interactive games** like flash cards, dice, manipulatives or “*Around the World*” with relevant math problems
- **Think-pair-share activities** and flipped classrooms can also help students get hands-on experience and talk through new ideas with peers in real time.



For the **Teachers Day Special** issue, send your contributions to - team@qedrak.com
An effective classroom strategy / class humour / vocab word / a featured article / book titles...

UNDERSTANDING &
IMPLEMENTING NEP 2020

SCHOOL LEADERS'
MEET



Mr. Rajiv Hazrat
President
WEF - INDIAN SECTION



Dr. Priti Sachdev
Honorary Secretary
WEF - INDIAN SECTION

World Education Fellowship or WEF (Indian Section) invited the QEDRAK Team to conduct this special workshop for over 30 Heads/Principals & Management of CISCE schools of Mumbai. Sponsored by the Gujarat Research Society, the event brought together brilliant participative minds that were motivated, energised and ready to understand, deliberate and plan for phasing in NEP 2020 into their schools. Here is a brief...



Almost two and a quarter years after the release of India's third Education Policy - NEP 2020, the education community is still waiting for the announcement of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for the same. However, without losing any time, the CBSE, CISCE, State Boards as well as private educational consultants are putting in their best efforts to help schools interpret, review and plan for restructuring and overhauling key educational practices proposed by the policy.



At this recently held workshop on 17th June at Mumbai, School heads and management found an easy, friendly and open platform to discuss the myths, doubts, confusing aspects of the Policy. The presentation by the QEDRAK team led the audience through a systematic understanding of the Policy highlights with a focus on how it would impact schools in term of key functional areas.



In order to help plan for the expected changes, the QEDRAK team offered very useful templates that school heads could use to review their existing structures and then list down progressive changes that would need to be planned for, over time, to implement NEP 2020. A journey that will take time, but clearly a journey that has started for them all!