**Language Dilemma**

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The multiplicity or diversity of languages is considered one of the major factors that divide the (global) community mainly by reinforcing geographical, socio-economic (especially caste or class), political, ideological, professional and religious separatism. It prevents or hinders communication and the spread of education, and therefore, aggravates misunderstanding and mutual suspicion. Multilingualism within a country may result in poor communication between the members of different linguistic communities and between those communities and the government officials. It can lead not only to mistrust and political tension but also poor levels of literacy in some cases.

Coupled with this, language diversity may generate language controversy, which, in turn, can lead to the division or partition.

For example, where the Urdu-Hindi controversy is considered among one of the major factors responsible for the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in the August of 1947, the Urdu-Bengali controversy is deemed one of the leading causes of the partition of Pakistan into Pakistan and Bangladesh in the December of 1971.

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Thus, in Pakistan, “the response to linguistic diversity has been a blunt insistence on the national and foreign languages, Urdu and English. This has made quality education impossible for the majority of Pakistani children who grow up without exposure to these languages.”

Carrying this legacy of multiplicity or diversity of language and language controversy, Pakistan is still confronted with the language dilemma. On the one hand, Urdu has been the only national language until today – whereas, more than 70 languages are spoken in the country. While on the other, English, despite being a colonial inheritance, is the official language and medium of communication in the South Asian nation. Therefore, the adoption and promotion of Urdu and/or English as a medium of education has remained a point of controversy. Apart from the Urdu-English conundrum, the speakers and advocates of other native languages have also been raising voices and recording their protests against the dominance of Urdu.

Currently, the state run faculties have Urdu as Medium of Instruction (MOI) whereas elite and alternative non-public faculties have English for the said purpose. These two polarised MOIs lay the premise of a lot of confusion in education sector that has caused an in-depth gap in achieving our desired goals via the foremost affected toll, education. Thus, we have failed to work out distinction between MOI and an obligatory subject i.e. English. Due to this failure, we may highlight that the most backward province of Pakistan, Baluchistan, is the most affected province or region in the country.

To say, the distinction in Medium of Instruction and first language creates a lot of confusion. Anjum Altaf, Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Faculty of Humanities at Lahore University of Management Sciences, holds that neglecting Medium of Instruction is deceiving our generation and halting us teaching our children in their mother tongue, and subsequently, depriving the young minds of an opportunity of learning in their mother tongue. Instead, they are compelled to learn in English preferably and sometimes in their national language.

Instead of falling a prey to the language controversies and dilemmas, Pakistan should have followed Europe’s policy for education on language: “mother tongue and two”, wherever children’s schooling starts in first language and that they acquire to a lot of languages before finishing high school. The effectiveness of Medium of Instruction is rarely addressed seriously in the South Asia in general and in Pakistan in particular.

English, being the language of few (elite and policy makers), enjoys dominance whereas the majority suffers. Subsequently, the number of school-dropout has risen sharply. Therefore, it has obstructed Pakistan fulfilling its promises, signed with the global organisations and agencies, of education for all and increasing literacy rate – for, it is the signatory of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals.

Therefore, the policy makers and the educational practitioners are recommended to adopt a language progression path where the children are initially taught in their mother tongues or regional languages, then in the provincial language and national language before exposing them to an international language ie English.

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