



NEP 2020: Scrapping English Would Not Be Positive

by [Neeta Kolhatkar](#) August 13, 2020

After the National Education Policy was announced, the reality began to sink in, with experts and opposition voices signalling it was the RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) line that has been taken forward by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government.

Politics of language

The policymakers have smartly said they have left it to the states to decide whether they will enforce the rule for imparting basic education in the regional language/mother tongue. This choice itself is political, like the entire policy. If we must assess this ideology, then we need to closely monitor the political party that has risen on the 'sons of the soil' doctrine in Maharashtra. The Shiv Sena and its founder Bal Thackeray, flaunting their Marathi identity, started a violent campaign, first against south Indians and later, against people from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They demanded that the official business of the state government, both spoken and written, be conducted in Marathi and locals be hired instead of migrant workers but after this tokenism, they proceeded, for the most part, to ignore the local language. One would have expected them to make efforts to ensure that high school

and degree college textbooks, the encyclopaedia, research and study material would be in Marathi.

Politics apart, none of the governments, especially the Shiv Sena and the BJP, did much to promote the language. The Sena ensured it changed the name of Bombay to Mumbai in 1995, but over a period of time, the use of Marathi language itself has decreased. In fact, the Marathi Abhyas Kendra, a non-governmental organisation working on Marathi language and its usage, has [demanded](#) that the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation incorporate more Marathi in their daily proceedings. This NGO has even promised to [bring out](#) a non-white paper to highlight the failure of the former minister for the Marathi language, who did nothing to promote the use of Marathi beyond making tall promises.

There was a time when the quality of teachers and education in regional language schools was excellent. But aspirational parents began moving their children to 'better' (read English medium) schools. We have been seeing a change in enrolment patterns. From language schools to English-medium schools is one such shift, then those who had enrolled their children in the state board schools moving them to ICSE, CBSE and taking it a step further, to International Baccalaureate schools. As a result, the BMC too had to realise, a tad late, that it needed to hold on to their students and that could only happen if it offered quality education. The newly elected government has realised this too and said it will [provide](#) ICSE curriculum to BMC schools.



Shiv Sena leader Aaditya Thackeray with BMC School Student (Source: Web)

In Mumbai, there are municipal, private aided, private unaided and unrecognised schools. In Maharashtra meanwhile, by seventies, our politicians were the first to open colleges and universities to perpetuate their dynasties and legacies. They were called 'Shikshan Samrats' (educational emperors). The entire higher education system thrived on capitation fees sought by these dynastic educational institutions and in this chaos, basic school education was ignored. This sums up the utter disdain for these vital, building-block years of education.

Once upon a time, even the quality of education in language schools of BMC was of a high standard. However, we have seen students drop out for many reasons, initially, due

to demographic changes. As redevelopment began taking place in old areas, the 1992 riots, we began seeing the [exodus](#) of population from certain pockets. Automatically, the language schools took a beating.

In the last few years, there are not enough human resources available for teaching. The population set-up is not homogenous. Language schools had begun to face two most important challenges: First, the lack of students and second, the lack of quality teachers. While teachers wanted higher pay and better infrastructure, English schools that had begun mushrooming required good quality teachers. As a result, enrolment in BMC schools began dwindling. In fact, as early as 1993, the municipal corporation had begun leasing its classrooms across the city to NGOs. The NGOs could not afford to lease properties in island city at affordable rates, while municipal schools sought reasonable rents.



BMC Students Studying before COVID-19 Lockdown (Source: Web)

BMC Marathi schools shutting down

Currently, it is a rather pathetic situation in Mumbai alone. Pre-primary Mumbai public schools are performing better than those run by the BMC. In fact, the Praja Foundation has been regularly tracking the municipal corporation and its functioning. It [said](#) 229 schools have shut down in the last 10 years and 41 Marathi-medium schools have shut down in Mumbai till now and by 2028, the remaining will have no students.

According to their 2018-2019 [report](#), total enrolments in BMC schools have been on the decline. There were 96,339 fewer students in 2018-19 in schools as compared to 2014-15.

Also, Class 1 enrolments have dropped from 67,477 in 2009-10 to 27,918 in 2018-19, a shocking 59 per cent slump. Further, dropout data shows that 10 per cent of those enrolled in 2018-19 dropped out of school in the same year. Retention rates of students from Class 1 to Class 10 too, show a disturbing trend.

Now, compare this decrease to the growing student budget of the BMC. In 2014-15, the BMC spent Rs 50,586 per student, which has risen to Rs 60,878 in 2018-19.

Although the budget has increased, a household survey commissioned by Praja to Hansa Research [revealed](#) that 87 per cent of total respondents would want to shift their children to private schools.



The number of students in BMC-run schools has plummeted over the years. (Source: Web)

Worse, as the number of drop-outs has increased, the authorities have begun merging schools and classes. Schools in Maharashtra are governed by the Right to Education Act, which states schools that have less than 20 students have to be merged with a nearby school. This rule is applicable across the state. So, even if there is one student in the Marathi medium, s/he stands to lose out if that school is shut and merged with the nearby school. Now, in this dismal reality, the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government would actually spoil the future of students if they choose to implement the [NEP](#) policy of teaching in the mother tongue.

Experts also fear, these students shunted out of their language schools which have merged with another school, usually, an English medium one can suffer discrimination. The fact is, even though a national policy toes the popular Sanghi line, the fact is Indians have discrimination in their DNA.

Those who are English-speaking look down on those schooled in regional languages and contemptuously refer to them as 'vernies'. The latter then become diffident students, lacking confidence and eventually losing out, only because they go about in constant fear of being pulled up for mispronunciations and grammar. These multiple problems were in fact highlighted by many Dalits on social media as they questioned the motive behind this policy. The fact is, the privileged will further benefit and the underprivileged, mainly the Adivasis and Dalits, who cannot afford private education in English, fear their children will continue to stay behind.



Students rushing to school. (Source: Web)

The percentage of Dalit school dropouts continues to be worrying for educationists. Although the school drop-out rate has decreased from 81 per cent for the 6-14 years' age group to 60 per cent in the 15-19 years' age group. It has however shown a considerable decrease in higher education, 11 per cent.

Data from 2017, according to the ministry of human resource development now renamed education ministry, shows 2,461 dropped out of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), 47.5 per cent of whom were mainly from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.

Despite the privileged and upper-caste complaints against reservations, the fact is, it is tough for the poor and the underprivileged to get into schools and continue their studies. Usually, poverty and tough family situations that pose bigger challenges.

It definitely seems unadvisable for the state government to scrap schooling in English. The current scenario is dismal and it will only serve to alienate students and society further.

Link:- <https://hwnews.in/news/opinion/nep-2020-scrapping-english-would-not-be-positive/142439>