



Historical Perspective and Current Practices of Language in Education Planning in Pakistan

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Abstract

The present study seeks to explain the provision of education during the British colonial rule in the subcontinent and the extent to which Pakistani educational policies adhere to colonial legacies. This investigation concluded that Pakistan remains entangled in colonialism despite achieving independence. Pakistan's education system has been hindered in addressing its language in education needs due to the influence of the ruling class and their interests, which have prevented the country from achieving independence from colonial reasoning. Pakistan has to contend with neocolonialism via education which is stratified by economic class resulting in a concentration of opportunities among a tiny elite who possess proficiency in English. At the global level, there is a contention that utilizing a language of instruction that is not the learner's primary language poses a considerable obstacle to achieving high-quality education across all stages of education. In addition, it is more probable for children to attain proficiency in a second language if they acquire literacy skills in their primary language beforehand.

Concerning the friction between Urdu, English, and other regional languages, there is a repeated imperative to advocate for the attainment of 'universal literacy' in one's mother tongue rather than considering one language at the expense of the other. The proposition is for education policies to adopt the concept of 'multilingualism,' leveraging indigenous resources to strengthen the establishment of Pakistan's national identity, which must be responsive to recognizing regional languages in formal education.

Keywords: Historcial, Language, Education, Planning, Pakistan

1 Introduction

Pakistan inherited the colonial legacy of educational policies and practices from independence, i.e., 1947. In the Indian subcontinent, the British colonial ruler used the British education system to use education as a political tool to extend their supremacy (Altbach, 2008). The colonial education policies implemented “English” as the prestigious language in the Indian Subcontinent to maximize control over the colony. The end of colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent created population migration and partitioned the previously “British India” into two separate countries in 1947, i.e., Pakistan and India; however, Bangladesh separated from Pakistan in 1971 (Hamid & Rahman, 2019).

Despite the passage of almost 75 years since the exit of colonizers, the utilization, instruction, and acquisition of the English Language and education in contemporary Pakistan continue to exhibit a noticeable continuity with the colonial educational remnants (Peshkin, 1962). The foundation of educational planning in Pakistan did not gain any pace, and it is not in the prior interests of the policymakers (Husain, 2009). Simultaneously, persistent tension between English and nationalistic pursuit resulted in significant friction in the emergence of nearly incompatible divisions in developing explicit language policies within the nation.

A small number of elites in Pakistan have control over policy, capital, and production, and in the same way, schooling in

Pakistan also serves a small section of society (Shamim, 2008). Pakistan's few elites benefit from formal education, while educational opportunities are unavailable to low-income people. These existing class inequalities in education remained intensified when Pakistan adopted not a consistent language in education policy (Haidar, 2017) (Peshkin, 1962).

This research critically evaluated the historical literature on language in education policy of colonial educational policies before independence and then presented an analysis of the language in education across a class structure of education taken since the 1947s that has created educational inequality and strategically excluded people with low incomes from opportunities. Every formulated education and language policy did not achieve its set objectives and goals, as every policy has imposed foreign imperialism in education by promoting the colonial language. This article examines the predominant historical language in education patterns and policies implemented for reform and English education within the Pakistani education system (Altbach, 2008).

2 Literature review

2.1 Historical Background

The dissemination of knowledge has historically been a distinguishing feature of Islamic civilization in the South Asian region. Muslims have been instructed to pursue education as a religious obligation and draw connections between empirical observations and the underlying causes, fostering spiritual growth through learning. Regrettably, despite the unambiguous instruction, a significant demographic was denied access to the advantages of formal learning due to certain socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors (Altbach, 2008; Peshkin, 1962).

Implementing a modified education system by Muslims resulted in enhancements in social conduct, interpersonal communication, relationships, matrimonial alliances, and education and instruction. From the era of Muhammad bin Qasim (695-715) to that of the Mogul Emperor Humayun (1540-1556), educational institutions appreciated complete autonomy in their internal affairs and administration. They were at liberty to adopt any syllabus they

considered appropriate. Sultan Sikandar Lodhi, who ruled from 1489 to 1517, made a significant contribution to the cultural heritage of his kingdom by establishing Persian as the official language. Subsequently, under the reign of Mogul Emperor Akbar (1556-1605), the educational system began to shift away from its religious foundation due to the implementation of his adaptable policies. During the reign of Mogul Emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707), education was extensively disseminated, resulting in the emergence of scholars and erudite individuals in various fields, even in small towns and villages.

2.2 Educational Provision during the Colonial Period

The history of education in the Indian subcontinent can be traced back to ancient times when an indigenous educational system was prevalent. During the medieval period, the Islamic style of education achieved prominence because of Muslim invasions. Subsequently, during the British colonization era, imperialistic education was introduced. Before the early 19th century, the East India Company displayed a general lack of interest in education in the Indian subcontinent. However, during the period above, the European missionary East India Company took the initiative to establish multiple schools and colleges to encourage an educational program in the region (Riaz, 2011). Divergent viewpoints existed among colonial administrators concerning the objectives of educating the people of the subcontinent, the mode of instruction, the administration of educational institutions, and the means of extending educational opportunities throughout the nation (Faust & Nagar, 2001; M. Rahman et al., 2010; Viswanathan, 2022). According to Kumar (1991), the East India Company initially acknowledged its obligation to advance education in British India to enhance oriental languages and literature and augment the understanding of Western sciences among the Indian populace. In 1835, Thomas Macaulay (1800-1859) expressed the superiority of Western culture and the English Language, advocated for the education of the upper classes, and fervently advocated for the dissemination of Western knowledge through the use of English as a medium of instruction (A. Ghosh, 2002; Kumar, 1991).

In 1837, the East India Company established English as the official language of administration, thereby marking its formal entry into the education sector of the subcontinent. Implementing the new policy led to a swift expansion of English schools and colleges, as evidenced by (Mukerji, 1957; Seal, 1968). Furthermore, the prevalence of English as the primary medium of instruction gained prominence across the educational landscape (D. Ghosh, 2004; Roy, 1993). The financial crisis and English domination posed significant challenges for Indigenous educational institutions (Chatterjee, 1986). (Mukerji, 1957) contemplated that English was mandated as a core subject in secondary education for enrollment and a prerequisite for admission to higher education institutions. During the early 19th century, a British-inspired system of liberal English-language schools was established (Nurullah & Naik, 1962; Shukla, 1996).

Lord Curzon's education policy was published as a government resolution in 1904, following the all-Indian Education Conference at Shimla in 1901. This policy significantly impacted the high school level, particularly in public schools designed to serve the masses, as it increased vernacularization (Mukerji, 1957). Moreover, Takayama (2016) corroborated that elite schools, including European and convent schools, utilized English as the primary language of instruction, limiting access to education for many Indians based on their socioeconomic status or birth circumstances. From 1919 through 1921, reforms were implemented to provide access to elementary education in urban municipalities and rural unions. In 1930, establishing a provincial education department marked the initiation of the centralization and bureaucratization of education. The Hertz Committee of 1927 recommended the establishment of a Central Advisory Board in 1935 to facilitate policy formulation in the field of education. 1945 marked the establishment of an independent Education Department under the purview of the Central Government. The duties and obligations of this department were assigned to a member of the Central Executive, as documented by Nurullah and Naik in 1951. The British assumed the responsibility of addressing the educational

underdevelopment of the Indian sub-continent (Fischer-Tiné & Mann, 2004).

The curriculum delivered by the previously mentioned did not foster the acquisition of practical capabilities or specialization. Rather than promoting a diverse range of subjects, educational institutions prioritized classical and humanistic curricula to maintain the aristocratic preferences and behaviors of the upper class, forming a dependent elite (Ilon, 2000; Mukerji, 1957). It is highlighted by Roy (1993) that a group of individuals belonging to the upper elite of society was afforded opportunities for employment and social mobility to a certain extent. Their duties primarily involved providing clerical and administrative assistance to the colonial government, which operated in regions with significant linguistic and cultural diversity. Additionally, this group demonstrated a strong preference for British products (Chatterjee, 1986).

The emergence of a new elite resulted in an impression of disengagement from the masses, who could not participate in the newly established education system (Bhattacharya, 2005). The barriers to enrollment in schools for individuals with low incomes in British India were primarily economic and socio-religious. Low-income individuals were subjected to socio-religious restrictions associated with their caste, which were intended to impede their access to education. The financial burden of education constituted a significant deterrent for individuals with limited financial resources, thereby impeding their access to educational opportunities (Peshkin, 1962; M. Rahman et al., 2010). For individuals with limited financial resources, economic considerations such as direct expenses related to education, including fees, textbooks, uniforms, and other related costs, as well as indirect costs, such as the loss of potential earnings while the child is in school, are crucial factors to take into account. Individuals with limited financial resources may encounter difficulties overcoming these obstacles to attain knowledge. The colonial government implemented an education policy that adhered to the "filtration theory" (Bray, 1993) rather than pursuing efforts to uplift individuals from low-income backgrounds.

Nurullah and Naik (1962) criticized the British for their inability to establish a comprehensive national education system, failure to integrate Eastern and Western cultures, disregard for local education, and absence of a cohesive strategy or sustained effort to achieve a predetermined objective.

2.3 Pakistan's education system- A Colonial Remnant

Education in Pakistan cannot be fully understood without returning its connection to the period of British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent. Similar to other colonies, the British colonizers implemented contemporary English education in the subcontinent, intending to transform the native elites into devoted subjects of the colonial authority and its principles by establishing two types of educational institutions such as English-medium and vernacular-medium, to assist their political ends catering to the transmissible nobility and the growing professional class (Khattak, 2014; T. Rahman, 1995; Tikly, 1999).

The objective of establishing such educational institutions was to cultivate a knowledgeable native upper stratum that espouses the principles and beliefs of the British colonists. The objective was not to teach the colonized population but to cultivate a subset of individuals who would exhibit punctuality, loyalty, and honesty toward ruling power (Victor, 2010). The cohort of educated individuals from the local elite acquired proficiency in the English Language and assimilated the attire and values of the colonizers to demonstrate their allegiance and appease them, resulting in their classification as a distinct social group within the colonized community. The colonizers employed this social class as a subordinate group in their governance and administrative systems, serving as a potent instrument to disseminate their cultural beliefs and principles to the remaining subjugated communities (Kassem et al., 2006). The cohort of learned individuals from the region served as intermediaries between the colonizing power and the subjugated population. Establishing a community comprising the native elites aligns with the colonizers' objective of fostering a similar group among the colonized people, which they sought to achieve through a strategic education policy (T. Rahman, 1995; Ramanathan, 2005; Victor, 2010).

The subcontinent's Muslim population resisted British colonial rule except for the economic elites. The colonizers aimed to establish modern secular education to cultivate loyal subjects. Most Muslims perceived contemporary secular education as potentially threatening their religious beliefs and cultural distinctiveness. Kassem et al. (2006) highlighted that many Muslims enrolled their children in Madaris for education, except for a few local elites. The primary objective of Madrassah schooling is to impart religious awareness and preserve Islamic individuality and native cultural beliefs from the impact of secularization (Riaz, 2011). The corresponding educational schemes have created hierarchies whereby Madaris graduates are perceived as the "Other" concerning the native elites (Victor, 2010). These deeds and strategies persisted until the sub-continent was partitioned into two autonomous nations: Pakistan and India.

Pakistan was characterized by a lack of institutional infrastructure and a largely impoverished and illiterate population upon its establishment in 1947. The significance of modern secular education was emphasized in that it previously faced opposition and was not easily accessible to most Muslims, particularly those living in impoverished and rural areas (Kassem, 2006). Nonetheless, the state lacked the institutional infrastructure and resources to implement effective policy. Despite scarce resources, certain public schools were made in municipal areas to provide individuals with the necessary scientific and technical knowledge to effectively manage the nation's economy and administration (Ullah & Ali, 2018).

2.4 Socioeconomic Consequences of Language in Education

Following the initial examination, it can be inferred that the educational system in Pakistan is stratified based on socioeconomic status, resulting in distinct educational systems for each income-based social class. The educational institutions under the state's control have received significant criticism owing to their substandard instruction (Khan et al., 2020; Tanveer et al., 2020). Furthermore, educational institutions functioning through the

government struggle with inadequate access to physical resources in classrooms and insufficient provision for learners and educators, perhaps due to a lack of commitment to educational policy priorities. Therefore, it is recognized that an absence of commitment towards accomplishing egalitarian educational objectives results in higher dropouts and persistent educational disparities based on gender and rural-urban divide (Mughal & Aldridge, 2017). Table 1 briefly examines several essential education indicators and then considers Pakistan's four main types of school-level institutions.

	primary	secondary	tertiary	other
Pakistan	54.7 (65)	38.51 (44)	5.75 (34)	1.04
Male	53.08 (66)	39.79 (45)	5.83 (34)	1.29
Female	56.92 (64)	36.75 (43)	5.64 (34)	0.68

Source: Pakistan Education Statistics (2017)

Note: Enrollment survival rate is presented in parenthesis

Table 1 illustrates that 54.7 percent of students are enrolled in the primary level of education, which shows that only 53.08 percent of males and 56.92 percent of females are in primary school. Only 65 percent survive until year 5; males share a 66 percent survival rate, and females survive 64 percent. Moreover, 38.51 percent of individuals are enrolled at the secondary level of education, among which 39.79 percent are males, and 36.75 are females, which have 44 percent, 45 percent, and 43 percent survival rates till year 8 for total males and females, respectively. Similarly, higher education shares 5.75 percent total with a survival rate of 34 percent, males share 5.83 percent in higher education with 34 percent, and females share 5.64 percent enrollment in the higher education survival rate of 34 percent. Moreover, research has indicated that the proportion of female out-of-school children in Pakistan at primary school age is 60 percent. The adult illiteracy rate, encompassing individuals aged 15 years and above, is 46

percent, positioning it as the fifth highest in the Asian region and the seventeenth highest worldwide (Coleman, 2010).

3 Issues and Challenges in language planning

According to Aly (2007) a white Paper on education in Pakistan recommends that English be utilized as the medium of instruction for all university and college lessons in sciences and technology. The existing literature has established that the adverse effects of employing English as the instructive medium in Pakistan's subject classrooms have been extensively documented (Brock-Utne, 2005; Tsui & Tollefson, 2004). Utilizing English as the primary medium of instruction in multilingual settings, such as in Pakistan, can potentially result in unfavorable outcomes, including the "linguistic genocide" of other native languages (Brock-Utne, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2006). Additionally, acquiring concepts in English, frequently the third or fourth language for children in Pakistan, may result in cognitive and educational implications. Research has demonstrated that utilizing a language other than the mother tongue as the instruction is crucial in attaining high-quality education throughout their learning experience (Nekatibeb, 2007). In Pakistan, children attend non-elite private schools that offer instruction in English or public schools that provide instruction in Urdu. In these settings, teachers often possess limited expertise in English and may restrict the practice of English as a means of conversation within the classroom. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that in such educational institutions, where both the instructors and the learners have limited proficiency in English, the pedagogues promote "rote learning" of concepts (Shamim, 2008). The phenomenon of "devoicing" among students, as described by (Ramanathan, 2005), has the potential to result in decreased literacy levels rather than an improvement in educational standards.

Research has illustrated that utilizing the mother tongue as an instructive medium is the most optimal approach for children's learning, as it leads to improved learning outcomes, social development, self-assurance, and critical thinking abilities. The

literature has proved that early education in a child's native language can benefit their development. Children's acquisition of fundamental concepts is more efficient when conducted in their native language, as there are no hindrances to comprehension. For various reasons, educating children in a language unfamiliar to them has significant repercussions, particularly during the initial years of primary school (Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

The probability of children remaining in school is significantly lower when their native language is not utilized. According to a survey conducted across 22 countries, which analyzed data from approximately 160 language groups, it was observed that the primary language spoken by an individual's mother had a significant impact on their educational attendance in nearly all countries which remained consistent after controlling for variables such as socioeconomic status and gender. The survey also revealed that half of the world's out-of-school children reside in communities where the language used for schooling is seldom spoken at home. As a result, this presents a significant obstacle in attaining the objective of Education for All (EFA), as it is accompanied by a history of unproductive methodologies that result in reduced educational achievements and elevated rates of student dropouts and repetition of grades (Gove & Cvelich, 2011).

Another negative consequence of providing education in a language that is not mutually understandable between teachers and students is the anticipated decrease in overall academic achievement levels. The observation that language policy decisions in education are seldom informed by evidence of this nature holds considerable significance. Using a language for instructional purposes in the school curriculum appears to hurt the academic performance of individuals who do not have access to it in their home setting, particularly those who do not have consistent exposure to it outside of the school environment.

Based on empirical evidence collected through international assessments of learning outcomes, it has been observed that students not taught in their mother tongue are susceptible to a

significant decline in their academic performance when they continue their studies. The existing research on children's language acquisition asserts that acquiring an unfamiliar language during preschool and primary years can be difficult for children holds particularly true when individuals face additional educational challenges, such as poor living conditions, food insecurity, and inadequate educational resources. According to pedagogical research, knowledge acquisition in children involves establishing connections between newly introduced information and pre-existing cognitive structures; hence, unexpected shifts to an unfamiliar language impede the establishment of those linkages.

Moreover, employing a second language in the initial stages of education results in potential constraints on children's proficiency in said language, which lacks justification. However, assuming all other factors remain constant, it is probable that children first acquire fundamental literacy skills in their mother language and subsequently receive instruction in a second language non-native language. Furthermore, another adverse outcome of teaching a child in a non-native language has far-reaching implications; for instance, excluding linguistic communities from educational opportunities has the potential for political instability and conflict. A comprehension of the advantages of mother language instruction and the potential drawbacks of education in a non-native language can facilitate our comprehension of some of Pakistan's challenges. For instance, government schools employ Urdu as the primary mode of instruction; nonetheless, the fact that only 6.8 percent population has Urdu as their mother language. However, it is noteworthy that a small fraction primarily speaks English of the privileged population in Pakistan. It is used as the primary mode of instruction in elite and non-elite private schools (Shamim, 2008).

It can be inferred that education in the mother tongue is not readily available to a significant majority of children in Pakistan, with an estimated proportion of around 95 percent. According to a recent study, a significant majority of 91.6 percent of school children are not allowed to pursue their education in their mother

language. In Pakistan, many children are not enrolled in educational institutions, and the dropout rates are high. In contrast, the survival rate from primary to secondary education is relatively low, linked to inconsistent mother language in educational contexts. It has been reported that when education is delivered in a language unfamiliar to children, it results in substandard educational performance in elementary schools. Non-elite private schools exhibit marginally superior outcomes, which may be attributed to the comparatively more excellent resources and time their instructors spend in instructional settings than their public school counterparts (Nurmaliyah et al., 2023).

Significant research published by CfBT and Save the Children highlighted the potential vulnerability of Pakistan in the absence of a concentrated effort towards adopting education based on the mother tongue. Pakistan is among the 44 nations with a significant proportion of the population lacking access to education in their native language, which exhibits a high probability of low academic achievement. Additionally, Pakistan is classified as one of the 34 nations with a large rural population, and it is distinguished as one of the 19 countries exhibiting high linguistic fractionalization levels (Haidar & Manan, 2021). Consequently, an accompanying threat exists that unsuitable language in education may foster enduring political, societal, and financial instability and create divisions based on linguistic and ethnic factors. Pakistan is reported 11th nation that exhibits higher levels of conflict, posing a significant risk of language policy having profound implications on the already uncertain state of affairs. The analysis findings suggest that nations characterized by intricate linguistic and ethnic cleavages and elevated levels of instability necessitate thorough concentration of their language-related educational policies and procedures (Shamim & Rashid, 2019).

4 Issues and Challenges in policy implementation

The effective implementation of the present language education policy in Pakistan might be influenced by various factors, such as the significant socioeconomic disparities evident in the Urdu- and

English-medium educational paths within the country's education system, the absence of a cohesive implementation strategy with enduring provisions, and the dearth of an articulated national language policy. This section will provide a concise overview of the factors above. As noted earlier, a considerable degree of heterogeneity among schools in Pakistan concerning their language in education as English and the provision of resources, including human capital, allocated towards the facilitation of teaching and learning (T. Rahman, 1995, 2005). As previously discussed, the signal from Pakistan and other post-colonial states directed the discouraging state of teaching and learning using English as the medium of instruction, a language in which teachers and students possess inefficient skills.

Therefore a key challenge is to provide equal chances for teaching English to the students studying in Urdu medium, i.e., public schools, and English-medium, i.e., non-elite private schools in Pakistan, as is presented to the students in elite English-medium schools. Second, language acquisition planning in education does not have a shared execution plan with sustainable schemes (Cooper, 1989). It is recognized that the successful implementation of language education policies depicts that the Federal Ministry of Education is responsible for most of the work, such as curriculum development (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997).

As externally "imposed" donor-funded schemes in Pakistan have historically not been sustainable (Shamim, 2008), the current actions for implementing the new curriculum perhaps be implemented immediately. Consequently, one of the obstacles to the successful implementation of policy in Pakistan's school education is the development of sustainable schemes shared across the three administrative and decision-creating levels – federal, provincial, and district. Third, the existing language in education policy is not part of a national language policy, however instead consists primarily of government officials' statements, periodic government notifications, and counseling documents, which could perhaps separate and uneven implementation struggles at various education levels in

Pakistan. Therefore, the importance of a well-defined language education policy within a national language policy cannot be overstated (Aly, 2007).

Developing an extensively acknowledged national language policy in Pakistan's multilingual context perhaps imposes a significant dare on current and upcoming governments, as language hierarchies are frequently connected to supremacy connections in such situations (Arthur, 2001). The preceding discussion necessitates that a global orientation to English without an affiliated change in the disparity of children's educational opportunities in different school types, and in the absence of shared and sustainable implementation schemes located within an explicitly defined language policy, may result in an increase in illiteracy rather than an increase in English literacy for instance, to many African and Indian nations, where the medium of instruction becomes an additional cause of school failure (Annamalai, 2004).

5 CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis demonstrates that, despite our independence from the Hindus and the English, we could never be free of colonialism. The ruling class and their interests never allowed Pakistan to meet its own needs independently. Currently, the nation faces neocolonialism, industrial imperialism, and its education system; after 75 years of independence, Pakistan's education system cannot foster patriotism; however, colonialism continues to exert its influence. Pakistan's class-based education system implies polarization according to socioeconomic class (Rahman, 2004). Short-term educational and long-term socioeconomic outcomes are entirely different for each socioeconomic group acquiring education. For example, Islamic Madaris attracts low-income students who cannot receive an education. Similarly, the working and middle classes prefer public and non-elite private education, whereas Urdu is the language used for schooling. Elite private schools provide privileges and advantages to the elite and promote English medium instructions spoken by a tiny ruling elite in the country.

It has been established that language in education is responsible for Pakistan's class-based education system, where opportunities are concentrated among a small English-speaking elite. On the international level, however, it is argued that a medium of instruction other than the mother tongue is a significant barrier to attaining quality education throughout the entire learning process (Nekatibeb, 2007). Because children interact with one another, the games they play could be incorporated into the classroom setting. Children can understand effectively in the language they speak because comprehension and cognition can only be developed through mother language instructions. Moreover, children are more likely to learn a second language successfully if they become literate in their native language first. As a result, parents may be capable of monitoring and contributing to their children's education. Parents not only reinforce what is occurring at school, but they can also feel indulged in their children's school development. Concerning the friction between Urdu, English, and other regional languages, there is a repeated imperative to advocate for the attainment of 'universal literacy' in one's mother tongue rather than considering one language at the expense of the other. The proposition is for education policies to adopt the concept of 'multilingualism,' leveraging indigenous resources to strengthen the establishment of Pakistan's national identity, which must be responsive to recognizing regional languages in formal education.

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