
**LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND KNOWLEDGE: ROLE OF
SANSKRIT AND REGIONAL LANGUAGES WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) 2020**

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DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.1913>**ABSTRACT**

Language is one of the most fundamental tools through which human beings acquire, structure, and transmit knowledge. Literature, as a refined expression of language, preserves cultural memory and intellectual traditions. In the Indian context, Sanskrit and regional languages have historically contributed to philosophy, science, social thought, and artistic expression. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 recognizes linguistic diversity and promotes multilingual education as a means of strengthening cognitive development and cultural rootedness. This paper examines the relationship between language, literature, and knowledge, focusing on the role of Sanskrit and regional languages within the framework of NEP 2020. It analyses policy provisions such as mother-tongue instruction, the three-language formula, and the integration of Indian Knowledge Systems. The study argues that strengthening Indian languages is essential for inclusive education and sustainable knowledge development.

INTRODUCTION

Language is central to human communication and intellectual development. It shapes thought, identity, and cultural continuity. Literature reflects social realities, philosophical ideas, and ethical values, making language a powerful medium for knowledge transmission. India's civilization has been nurtured through Sanskrit and numerous regional languages. Sanskrit served as a classical and scholarly language, while regional languages preserved local traditions and social experiences. However, the dominance of English in modern education weakened the role of Indian languages. NEP 2020 seeks to restore balance by re-

centering Indian languages within the education system. Language shapes cognition, identity, and social interaction. Scholars argue that language is not merely a communication tool but a framework through which knowledge is organized and interpreted (Sapir, 1921; Vygotsky, 1978). Literature reflects lived experiences, philosophical ideas, and ethical values, making it a vital medium of cultural transmission. India's civilization has been sustained through Sanskrit and regional languages. Sanskrit functioned as a pan-Indian scholarly language, while regional languages developed vibrant literary cultures rooted in local histories (Pollock, 2006; Rao, 2014). However, colonial education policies privileged English, marginalizing indigenous languages and knowledge systems (Kumar, 2005). NEP 2020 seeks to correct this imbalance by placing Indian languages at the centre of educational reform (Government of India, 2020).

Objectives of the Study

To explore the role of Sanskrit and regional languages in India's knowledge and cultural traditions.

To examine NEP 2020 provisions on language education, including mother-tongue instruction and the three-language formula.

To assess challenges and opportunities in implementing multilingual education for inclusivity and cultural rootedness.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a conceptual and analytical approach, relying on: Review of literature on language, literature, and knowledge traditions in India.

Policy analysis of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 with reference to Sanskrit and regional languages.

Theoretical framework drawing from linguistic, educational, and cultural studies to interpret the role of multilingualism in knowledge transmission.

Language, Literature, and Knowledge: Conceptual Framework

Language, literature, and knowledge are deeply interconnected. Language enables expression, literature preserves experience, and knowledge shapes society. Language structures thought and worldview, a concept supported by linguistic and educational theory (Sapir, 1921). Literature acts as a cultural archive, preserving ethical reasoning, historical narratives, and indigenous knowledge (Rao, 2014).

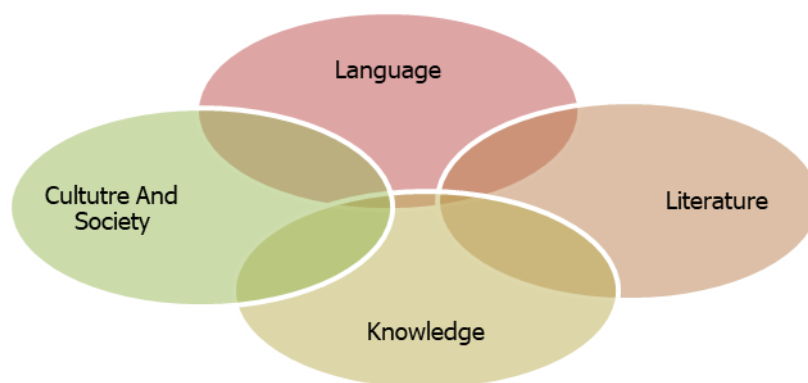


Figure 1: Relationship between Language, Literature, and Knowledge.

The interrelationship between language, literature, and knowledge shown in Figure 1 demonstrates how linguistic traditions sustain cultural and intellectual continuity, especially in multilingual societies like India (UNESCO, 2016). Language forms the foundation of literature, which in turn preserves and transmits knowledge. This knowledge shapes culture and society. In India, Sanskrit and regional languages sustain this continuum by preserving philosophical, scientific, and cultural traditions.

Literary texts function as repositories of historical memory, ethical reasoning, and social values. Oral traditions and folk literature in regional languages also preserve indigenous knowledge related to ecology, medicine, and community life.

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** has generated considerable scholarly discussion on the role of Sanskrit and regional languages in India's education system. Scholars such as Mittal (2021) argue that NEP 2020 integrates Sanskrit education across all levels, from primary to higher education, and emphasizes its relevance not only as a classical language but also as a living tradition that connects learners to India's intellectual heritage in philosophy, science, and literature. Vyas (2022) further highlights that the policy envisions Sanskrit as a medium of instruction and cultural resource, but stresses the need for continuous supply of quality materials such as textbooks, plays, poetry, and magazines to keep the language dynamic and engaging. On the other hand, Kumar (2025) focuses on the role of regional languages, noting that NEP 2020 recognizes India's linguistic diversity by promoting mother tongue or local language as the medium of instruction at least until Grade 5, preferably till Grade 8, thereby fostering inclusivity and cultural rootedness. He emphasizes that this multilingual approach, which requires students to learn at least three languages (regional, national, and global), balances cultural preservation with global competitiveness. Across these studies, common themes emerge: Sanskrit is positioned as a gateway to India's ancient

knowledge systems, while regional languages strengthen identity and inclusivity. However, challenges such as teacher preparedness, resource creation, and balancing global language needs remain significant hurdles in implementation. Thus, the literature collectively underscores that NEP 2020 envisions a multilingual, culturally rooted, yet globally competitive education system, with Sanskrit and regional languages playing complementary roles in achieving this vision (Mittal, 2021; Vyas, 2022; Kumar, 2025).

Linguistic Diversity in India and Educational Policy

India is one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world, with hundreds of languages spoken across regions. The Constitution recognises 22 scheduled languages, reflecting India’s pluralistic character. India’s linguistic diversity is constitutionally recognised, with 22 scheduled languages and hundreds of regional and tribal languages (Government of India, 2020). Historical education systems relied heavily on local languages and Sanskrit, enabling contextual and inclusive learning (Kumar, 2005). NEP 2020 views multilingualism as a cognitive advantage rather than a pedagogical obstacle. Studies indicate that multilingual learners demonstrate enhanced problem-solving and creativity (UNESCO, 2016). NEP 2020 promotes multilingualism as a strength rather than a challenge. It supports the three-language formula and emphasises flexibility, choice, and inclusivity.

NEP 2020 and Language Education Framework

One of the most important features of NEP 2020 is its emphasis on language-based learning. NEP 2020 recommends mother-tongue or regional-language instruction at the foundational stage, citing global research that supports improved comprehension and learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2016; Government of India, 2020).

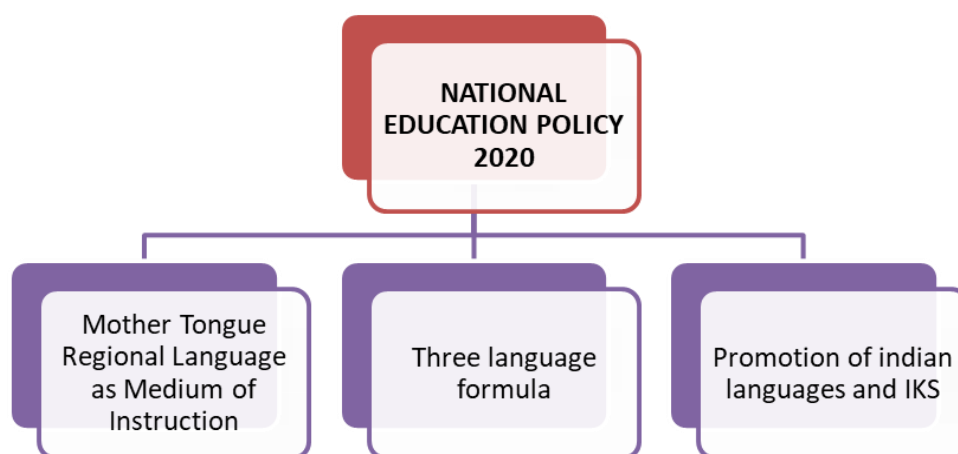


Figure 2: Language Policy Framework under NEP 2020

The policy promotes the mother tongue or regional language as the medium of instruction, encourages multilingual learning through the three-language formula, and supports Indian languages and knowledge systems, including Sanskrit. NEP 2020's commitment to linguistic equity, flexibility, and the promotion of Indian languages without imposing any single language (Government of India, 2020).

Role of Sanskrit in Literature and Knowledge

Sanskrit holds a unique place in Indian intellectual history. It has produced extensive literature in grammar, philosophy, science, medicine, and aesthetics.

Sanskrit is recognised globally for its systematic grammar and philosophical depth (Pollock, 2006). Texts such as *Aṣṭādhyāyī* by Pāṇini illustrate advanced linguistic analysis, while works.

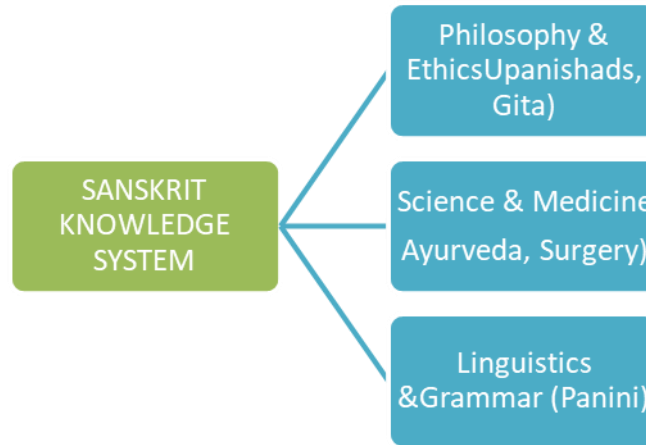


Figure 3: Sanskrit Knowledge System.

Like *Charaka Saṃhitā* demonstrate empirical scientific inquiry (Sharma, 2017). Sanskrit literary theory, especially the concept of *rasa*, has influenced both classical and modern literary criticism (Radhakrishnan, 1951). NEP 2020 encourages the study of Sanskrit as a knowledge language through experiential and interdisciplinary methods rather than rote memorisation (Government of India, 2020). Texts like *Charaka Saṃhitā* and *Aṣṭādhyāyī* demonstrate advanced scientific and linguistic knowledge, while philosophical texts explore metaphysics and ethics. NEP 2020 encourages Sanskrit education through innovative, experiential, and interdisciplinary approaches rather than rote memorisation.

Role of Regional Languages in Literature and Knowledge

Regional languages represent the lived experiences of communities and preserve social, cultural, and historical knowledge. Regional languages serve as vehicles for social consciousness and reform. Literary movements in Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, and Hindi played a significant role in nationalism and social transformation (Rao, 2014). Mother-tongue education promotes equity by bridging the gap between home and school environments, particularly for first-generation learners (UNESCO, 2016).

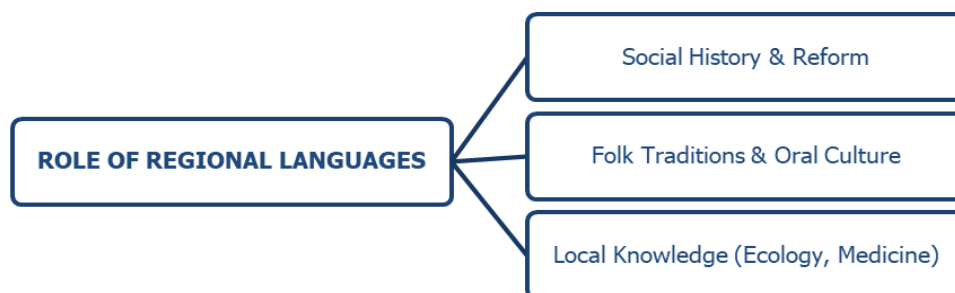


Figure 4: Role of Regional Languages in Knowledge Preservation.

Figure 4 shows how regional languages contribute to social consciousness, folk traditions, and indigenous knowledge. Literature in Tamil, Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, and other languages has played a crucial role in social reform and cultural awakening. regional languages preserve folk traditions, oral culture, and indigenous knowledge systems essential for sustainable development (Rao, 2014).

NEP 2020 supports the use of regional languages in school and higher education to promote equity and inclusion.

Mother Tongue Instruction and Learning Outcomes

NEP 2020 strongly recommends teaching in the mother tongue or regional language, especially in early education. Educational research consistently shows that early education in the mother tongue improves literacy, numeracy, and conceptual clarity (Vygotsky, 1978; UNESCO, 2016).

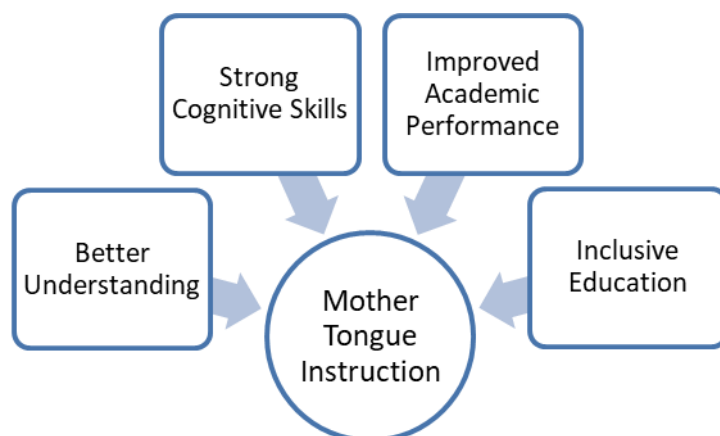


Figure 5: Impact of Mother Tongue-Based Education.

Figure 5 demonstrates how mother-tongue instruction leads to better comprehension, cognitive development, and academic success. This approach is particularly beneficial for first-generation learners and students from rural backgrounds. Figure 5 demonstrates how mother-tongue instruction contributes to cognitive development and inclusive education, a principle strongly endorsed by NEP 2020 (Government of India, 2020).

Indian Knowledge Systems and Integration with Modern Education

Indian Knowledge Systems are deeply embedded in Sanskrit and regional languages. Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) encompass traditional disciplines such as Ayurveda, Yoga, astronomy, and environmental ethics, all of which are deeply rooted in Sanskrit and regional languages (Sharma, 2017). NEP 2020 promotes the integration of IKS with modern disciplines to encourage interdisciplinary and holistic learning (Government of India, 2020).

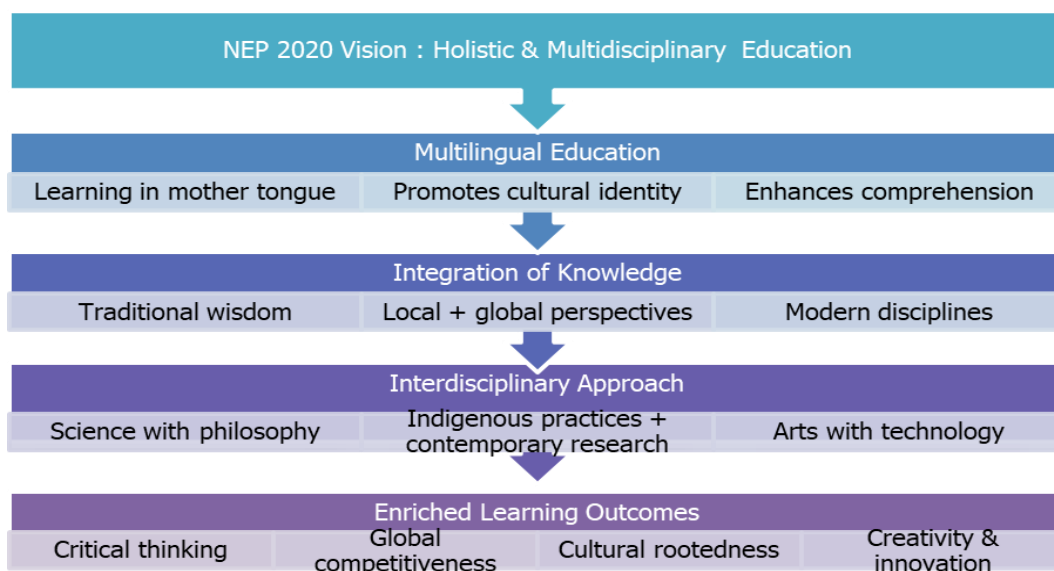


Figure 6: Integration of Traditional and Modern Knowledge Systems.

Figure 6 illustrates how NEP 2020 encourages integrating traditional knowledge with modern disciplines through multilingual education. This interdisciplinary approach enriches learning and promotes holistic understanding.

Challenges in Implementing Language Policy

Despite its progressive vision, NEP 2020 faces challenges such as lack of trained teachers, limited resources, and societal preference for English. Despite its progressive vision, NEP 2020 faces challenges such as teacher shortages, lack of academic resources, and societal preference for English due to economic considerations (Kumar, 2005).

Scholars caution that equitable implementation requires balanced support for all Indian languages rather than privileging any single linguistic tradition (Pollock, 2006).

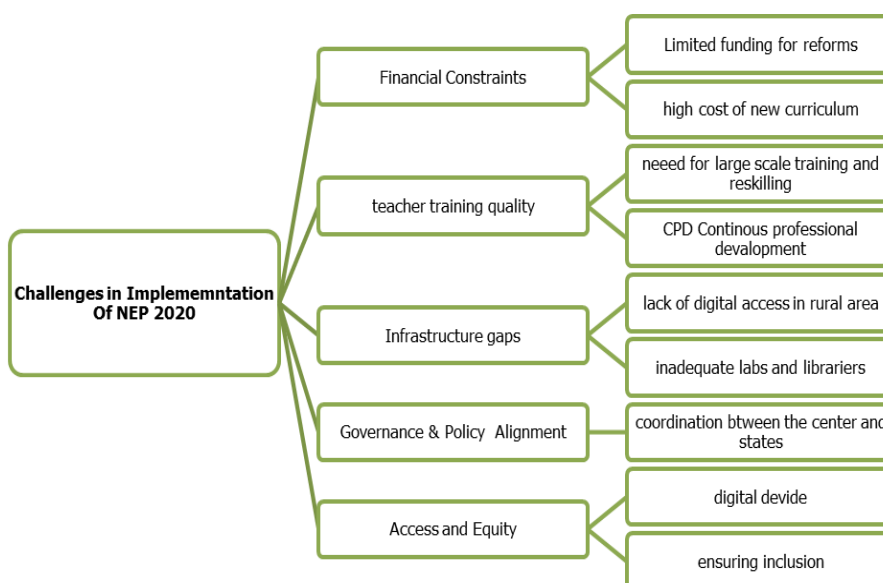


Figure 7: Challenges and Policy Responses.

Language and literature are essential to knowledge creation and cultural continuity. Sanskrit and regional languages embody India’s intellectual depth and social diversity. NEP 2020 provides a transformative framework for revitalising these languages within education. Effective implementation can promote inclusive learning, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen India’s knowledge systems in a globalised world. Language and literature are central to knowledge creation, cultural continuity, and identity formation. Sanskrit and regional languages represent India’s intellectual heritage and social diversity. NEP 2020 provides a comprehensive framework for revitalising these languages within education. Effective implementation can foster inclusive learning, strengthen cognitive development,

and ensure the sustainability of India's knowledge systems in a globalised world (Government of India, 2020; UNESCO, 2016).

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