

# **Report of the Working Group on Language Policy**

## **Recommendations of the Working Group on Language (WGL)**

### **Introductory Statement**

To create suitable ground conditions for India to become a knowledge society in the new millennium, it is essential to make the best possible school education available to all sections of society, bridging the gap between English medium and regional language medium instruction and that between the rural and the urban as well as the government schools and privately run schools.

Multilingualism has to be seen as one of India's significant resources and massive infusion of effort in developing high proficiency in mother tongue/ regional language as well as English as tools for accessing knowledge needs to be regarded as high priority. The WGL thus endorses the proposal (already under consideration by the NKC) to set up 400.000 schools (from Class I to X), conceived as 'neighbourhood schools', managed by the community and comparable in quality to the good Kendriya Vidyalayas.

We understand that the mandate of our group is to radically rethink the scope and quality of language learning promoted in schools through curriculum and through other means. This is the context in which the following recommendations are made.

### **Recommendations**

1. In this multilingual / mixed medium school system, English and Indian languages should be treated at par. It has been seen that a strong base in one's first language makes the student a better communicator in English. Hence this emphasis on teaching/ learning of both languages with equal care
2. Both English and the home language of the student / the regional language should be taught right from Class I, primarily for communication ( not emphasizing grammar at this stage ) and also as tools to access information. In case the home language is a non-schedule language spoken in the region, it should be taught for the first three years of school, and then augmented by the regional language.
3. There should be a provision to learn a third language from Class V onwards but it will not be compulsory. This option is for those who need an additional language to help them in their choice of profession, or live in areas where three languages are necessary for normal functioning.
4. To bridge the current divide between English-medium and regional language medium schools , and recognizing that language teaching is not to be confined to the language class alone, all schools shall teach some non-language subjects , chosen by the school,

in English, and others in the regional language, making sure however that the child's learning the subject is not hampered in any way.

5. This schema will apply to the Plus Two level (Higher Secondary) and vocational courses as well. The institutions must make sure that at the end of 12 years of schooling each student has equal proficiency in English and the regional language.
6. Further to this, at a higher level of learning ( post-graduate and professional courses ) the student will have the option to be taught in English or the regional language , and every state will create adequate opportunities to make both options available
7. At the undergraduate level we recommend a course called `Critical Understanding, Thinking and Expression ' that would be taught to all students regardless of the other subjects chosen by them. The aim of this course would be to equip the student with the multiple skills of comprehension, logical thinking, examining different views on a topic to arrive at an informed and independent position and the ability to express oneself clearly and effectively
8. Appropriate steps should be taken to create language learning opportunities outside the class room. For example region specific bi-lingual radio and TV channels could be introduced for formal and informal teaching and learning of English. Knowledge clubs could be formed to discuss and disseminate knowledge as well as extend the use of English informally.
9. Conventional ways of teaching language should be supplemented by setting up small resource libraries at the class room level ( ie., in every class and every section ) . This would be a collection of 30 to 50 books/magazines/newspapers/audio-visual material / posters appropriate to the age of the students on a variety of subjects in the relevant languages. Provision should be made for the children to access these books or material individually or collectively once a week as part of the language learning process. The material may be chosen from a larger list recommended by an appropriate body and renewed at least once every year. The teacher could add books /material of her/his choice. Wherever possible material could be contributed by parents and alumni also .
10. At least 600,000 teachers proficient in English will eventually be required for the 400,000 high schools that the country needs. To meet this requirement the pool of teachers will have to be larger than those that can be recruited through the existing system. We recommend that graduates with high proficiency in English and good communication skills be inducted without formal teacher-training qualification. They would be selected through an appropriate procedure and then given a short-term orientation.
11. A National Training Service ( NTS ) should be set up for recruitment of language teachers and for certification of language competence.

12. The nearly 4 million school teachers all over the country, regardless of their subject expertise , should be given opportunities to improve their proficiency in English. This could be done through vacation training programmes or other short-term courses.
13. We believe that the entire teacher training system that exists today, including training for language teaching, needs to be thoroughly reviewed in the light of the objective of making India a knowledge society. To create a knowledge society each individual should be encouraged to think on one's own rather than remain a passive recipient of information doled out to him/her .S/he should be actively involved in the generation of knowledge through various projects and have direct access to primary information. Language learning/ teaching also should be collaborative and interactive. For formulating and implementing a teacher training programme that emphasizes these objectives a national commission must be appointed.
14. Rethinking curriculum to make it relevant to real life should be one of the objectives and this would apply to the material used for language teaching as well. All material pertaining to teaching of languages should be produced by creative, competent and committed individuals. A suitable mechanism should be set up to ensure this.
15. The evaluation of the students' language proficiency as well as proficiency in other subjects should be a continuous process, gradually eliminating the end-of the-year examination. The attempt should be to measure individual growth rather than test each student against a fixed target of achievement

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