

A Review on Lachman Khubchandani's article "Language Policy and Education in the Indian Subcontinent"

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Abstract: *Language policy and education has become an influential tool for the countries to cope with modern global world. In this paper the writer shed lights on the summary of language policy and education of Indian sub-continent as mentioned in Lachman Khubchandani's article titled "Language Policy and Education in the Indian Subcontinent". The writer has explored the effectiveness and relevance of the information presented in the article through in depth reading and scrutiny. The study explores Khubchandani's information on various areas, confusion, history and modern perspectives of bi/multilingual societies and states of India which are important and relevant for the policy makers of language education. The study of this article will also provide the readers to have an in-depth knowledge that can enrich the understanding on language policy of India from past to present. Therefore, it is relevant and effective to shed light on the information presented in the article for the benefit of language practitioners and education policy makers who need better understanding about the historical background on language policy making and education system of Indian Subcontinent.*

Keywords: Language Education and Policy, Indian Sub-continent, Linguistic Diversity, Multilingual Society

Introduction

Lachman Khubchandani's article "Language Policy and Education in the Indian Subcontinent" is an important document which presents a brief overview and analysis on the education policy of Indian Subcontinent especially in India. The writer presents a brief overview on the language policy and education in the Indian Subcontinent based on relevant and empirical data analysis on Asian context. In this 21 century, language policy and education are considered as essential tools for socio-cultural and economic development for all the countries as it is the century of the world being a global village. Language education and language policy has become one of the influential tools to cope with modern global community. People are now much more aware than earlier period regarding language education and language policy. Language policy refers to language planning which is now considered important for a country or nation to promote selected languages for social, cultural, political and economic development. According to Liddicoat (2004, as cited in Djite, 1994:63) language policy has been defined as "the deliberate choices made by governments or other authorities with regard to the relationship between language and social life." It is now pertinent to review the article of Khubchandani to explore the language policy and language education system of Indian Subcontinent in order to help the language planners to develop a new and modified up-to dated language policy and education system. This article presents a brief overview on language policy and education of Indian subcontinent based on statistics and relevant exploration of history to focus on the routes of well-planned education policy, to put emphasis on the vernacular languages and focus on the idea called *education for all*. An important exploration here is that the writer of this article states in the introduction that "educational planners in the contemporary South Asian context have, by and large committed to education for all, but they have not yet been able to totally discard the elitist framework of selective education inherited from the Colonial setup (prevailing till 1974)." (Khubchandani, P.1). Therefore, here the writer tries to explore Khubchandani's detail description about the language policy and education of Indian subcontinent.

Author's Views

In the introductory section of the article, Khubchandani mentions the fact that in Asian context the education policy is far or less based on the elitist view and previous colonial impact or legacy is still

there. According to the writer it is evident that in Asian context education planners are committed to provide *Education for all* but anyhow the policies are still influenced by elitist framework of selective education inherited by colonial setup. The writer refers A. R. Nanda's article based on the Census of India—1991 and quotes from Nanda, "The decadal census enumerates 200 odd languages, spoken by the population exceeding 1 billion, spread in 30 states of 5 Union territories (Nanda, 1993). It is lucid from the census that India is a country of multilingual community and federal political system with wide variation regarding the status of language or languages in different states and regions. We can easily perceive the variation of Indian states regarding the language policy and education and Khubchandani states in the article that over 80 languages are used as a medium of instruction at different stages and about 18 of them are counted as principal medium languages including Hindi and English and there are also 14 languages concentrated in different regions.

Khubchandani points out that in the Constitution of India passed in 1950; the states have been given the power to choose a language or languages in a region as official language(s) (Article 345). It also allows linguistic minority groups to receive education in their mother tongues and to set up institutions of their choice for this purpose (Article 30). In 1980; authority was given to both the union and state governments to initiate legislation on education policies. The writer then describes the education system of India from the pre-British to post-British period. She writes about the pre-British education system of India which includes *pathashala* (for ordinary people to teach day-to-day needs of society through local dominant languages) gurukul, maktab and Madrasedh providing education to the elites through the classical languages using Sanskrit or Arabic-Persian. The traditional education system of India was replaced by British school education system during the 150 years of British rule and British administration could not resolve the three basic issues of education: the content, the spread and the medium (Dakin, 1968 as cited in Khubchandani). Instead of using vernacular (native languages), British Empire promoted English language to impart western knowledge in most of the educational institutions of India and in 1935 English was announced as medium of instruction for higher education. Thomas Babington Macaulay on his famous (Indian) Memorandum on Education argue that western learning was superior and could be taught through the medium of English and considered native culture and learning as inferior. Throughout the entire British reign, this situation was prevalent in India.

Khubchandani asserts that during the long struggle for Indian independence, the education structure was criticized by national leaders and intellectuals like Gohkale, Gandhi, Tagore and others and they saw the need for universal elementary education and also put forward pleas for the use of mother tongue in administration (Saiyidain, Naik and Hussain, 1962 as cited in Khubchandani). According to Khubchandani there were three patterns of education during the British rule such as the vernacular medium in rural areas, the English medium for the elites from the primary stage and the two-tier medium including vernacular medium for primary education and English medium for the advanced stages in towns. She summarizes that in today's educational infrastructures of South Asia, the education policy is influenced by the previous colonial legacy although Indian culture in school curriculum is recently labeled as universal, secular, and idealized. In the next portion, the writer has focused on the idea that modern education experts support the view that the best medium for teaching a child is their mother tongue (UNESCO Report, 1953, P. 11). All the experts now focus on intercultural education and linguistic diversity. The education in mother tongues gains highest importance in India now and in federal multilingual India different languages in educational programs are framing the language curriculum, text books, policy and planning of The National Council for Education Research and Training (NCERT), state councils of education and different NGOs.

The writer then presents the data of different surveys to show the importance of mother tongue based and linguistic diversity based education policy and planning of federal India. She also depicts the emergence and demands of three major contact languages including Hindi, Urdu and English throughout the country. Hindi and Urdu schools spread across 24 states out of 32 and Urdu is playing as an important contact language in Hindi-dominant states. Khubchandani states clearly the issue that multilingual states are introducing bilingual education introducing a developing language as state policy together with Hindi, English or regional language. The number of English medium public schools has increased rapidly in cities and rural areas as a *dominant colonial legacy*. The popularity of

English medium education has gradually increased throughout the country from the colonial period to this modern period.

The Writer has also analyzed the problems and difficulties students are facing now-a day's regarding bilingual or bicultural education in India. In today's multilingual societies of Indian states, the students are being in pressure of using three or more languages because of the continuous demands for higher education and career development. There is also a huge gap between language policies and practical application in classrooms. Different political issues are also connected with these bilingual and multilingual modes of language education. The students who are going for the higher education facing lots of challenges as they have to cope up with two, three or even more languages. So, the development of the unified language policy and education for bi/multilingual culture turns to be a challenging area in Indian context and education planners are divided in their opinions regarding language policy and education. According to Khubchandani conventional educationists focus on standard regional language, liberal educators on bi-dialectal approach, some for dichotomous and some other for grassroots approach or pluralistic model of literacy. Khubchandani at the end asserts predicting the future that grassroots approach would be more meaningful, useful and productive to work-experience and Ghandhi's Basic Education policy based on the idea *education for all* could be the sound basis for development of language policy and education. We find the similar kind of view from the article of Tollefson and Tsui titled *Language Diversity and Language Policy in Educational Access and Equity*.

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Criticism

Khubchandani's title and introduction of the article suggest that the writing is on the language policy and education of Indian Subcontinent but we find a brief overview on the policy and education of India. Instead of writing detail description on the language policy and education of the other countries of Indian Subcontinent, the writer has just written a general and short description which is one of the limitations of this article.

Conclusion

Khubchandani's article is a detail document on the language policy and education of India. She has explored various areas, confusions, history and the modern perspectives of bi/multilingual societies and states of India. The writer has also interwoven various issues with relevant data to shed light on the past, present and future of language policy and education of India and Indian sub-continent. The writer has described the importance of mother tongue education and preservation of language diversity with the suggestion to adopt a pragmatic approach. India is known for its social, cultural and linguistic diversity and India being a 'plural society' should go for 'uniform solution' regarding language policy and education. The idea *education for all* has become a buzzword in today's modern world and Khubchandani has focused on this idea for the education policy of India. Therefore, Modern researchers and professionals of language education domain will be able to find new ideas and research areas from this article.

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