
Seraiki COMMENT on Education Policy

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Please read a COMMENT' on the DRAFT education Policy which was devised by the Shaukat Aziz Government and is publicized by the present Federal Minister of Education for COMMENT which were to be sent by 3rd of May. I read the draft, discussed its salient features with friends and hastily prepared a COMMENT and dispatched the same on behalf of all friends. There might possibly be flaws in the quickly composed draft but given the deadline, one could not do better:

The draft is copied below and should be available on the Ministry of Education website.

Ahsan Wagha

THE COMMENT AND THE SUGGESTIONS

1. The Seraiki speaking people have great love for their language as for all the languages of Pakistan. After successful struggle for official recognition of their language—Seraiki is taught in the Seraiki Departments of the two Universities of Bahawalpur and Multan, is recognized for the Academy award by the Pakistan Academy of Letters, is broadcast / telecast by the area stations of Radio Pakistan and PTV—the Seraiki people now demand 'proper language planning' of their language in education sector. 'Language planning' is a task which is performed by governments. It was the great will of the Seraiki people of Pakistan and the great energy of their language activists that Seraiki has achieved a degree of 'language planning' in terms of script, linguistics, literature and publications without any support from the Department of education and the Government.

2. We suggest and we demand following changes in the Draft education policy:

A: The Draft prepared by the previous government does not deserve a hasty passage by the present Democratic government as this has some serious flaws, one being its obsession for English language. The examples of adherence to 'mother tongue' by the technologically advance nations like Chinese and Japanese, and that of fast developing Arab nations and the Malaysians prove that language policy of Pakistan has been set on wrong direction. We need not follow the model of few long-slaved African nations.

B: The clause 3 and the clause 4 of the Policy Action under 5.5 read as;

3. The curriculum from Class I onward shall include English (as a subject), Urdu, one regional language, mathematics along with an integrated subject.

4. The Provincial and Area Education Departments shall have the choice to select the medium of instruction up to Class V.

The above insertions show that the Draft suffers from the same old 'indecisiveness' on the issue of language and education.

C: We suggest that: (i) The principal of 'Early education in mother tongue' be regarded as matter of Child's right and a way of freeing early education from cultural alienation. Implementation of this rule be made compulsory for all without any dichotomy or trichotomy of English / Urdu / Regional language.

D. There should be clear distinction between language teaching as subject and use of language as medium of instruction.

E. English should have status of subject compulsory after class 3, and never as that of medium of instruction except for graduate level studies and research.

F. Urdu should be medium of instruction only where it is the first language of more than 50% of the children enrolled in a school. This should be taught as subject after class 3 in rest of the areas.

G. The Text book boards for Primary education should be decentralized at the District level where the syllabus be prepared by local educationists in 'mother tongues' of the children according to a skeleton, or outline will be provided by the Center / the Ministry(ies) of education.

H. The policy should not be based on the conclusions drawn by the National Education Assessment System as the same is known as largely flawed. A more exhaustive consultation is required to achieve full participation of writers and the so called 'language-activists' who are the real 'Corpus planners' of their respective languages. This will also work as means to achieving national agreement on plurality.

Dr. Ahsan Wagha
