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AN INVESTIGATION OF SKEPTICS ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIUM: A CASE OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study aims to look into the issues of medium of instruction in Pakistan from the time of Independence in 1947 till the present. In this study, the issues are examined along with the change in educational policies over the years. This study includes data that is collected from publications, reports and government documents. Findings indicated that medium of instruction is one of the main issues in the education system of Pakistan. The differences in the medium of instruction are observed in different educational settings. According to previous studies, language has been used as an ethnic identity marker in the past. The study shows that not much has changed with regards to the medium of instruction in Pakistan.

Keywords: Medium of instruction, education system, Pakistan

Introduction

One of the basic challenges faced by researchers and policymakers is to comprehend the nature and issues of medium of instruction (Fareed & Ashraf, 2019; Imam, 2021; Asif, Afzal, & Bashir, 2020; Jha, 2021). In most of the developing and developed nations, the aim is to achieve a high level of educational achievement and outcome, if not sufficient, condition for boarder development, enlarging the scope for individuals to be productive, efficient and creative. As in the past, policymakers and researchers try to apprehend the global and country-specific factors that contribute to higher educational outcomes. However, the higher educational outcomes are often quite difficult to predict and attain due to the differences in languages, changes in the medium

of instruction, economic turmoil and political uncertainty.

Since years, the role of language is quite crucial in order to convey instructions to students of all levels and to ensure that students develop the strong literary skills that are foundational for the learning that takes place in the later stages of life. It is observed that often students face comprehension difficulties in the reading lessons that are scrupulously designed, due to the language that is used by the instructors in the classroom. In most of the countries, the language that is used as the medium of instruction in educational institutions tends to be different from the native or national languages of those countries. Policies and practices regarding the medium of instruction are considered to be quite essential for a child's improvement in reading outcomes and for learning purposes. The medium of instruction determines the ways to teach and impart instructions in any subject, discipline or at any level of learning.

Education is one of the factors that paves a path and allows a country to make progress and move forward as a nation. It is considered to be a road to success and prosperity. However, if this road does not receive the attention and focus that is needed to solve the issues and problems that exists within it then there are minimal chances for this road to lead to the right destination. In the case of Pakistan, education is still a neglected area that could otherwise help the country to move forward and compete with other countries of the world. The failure to give due attention to education makes the government and the policymakers overlook the issues that exist within the education system in Pakistan, such as the issues of the medium of instruction.

The issues of the medium of instruction are a topic that is of paramount importance for researchers and policy makers. Throughout the years, this topic that is the issues of the medium of instruction has been in the limelight and it continues to gain attention even in recent times. A number of researchers have made contributions in the existing literature on the presence of this ongoing issue by analyzing a set of countries of their choice. Following this tradition, this research article explores and looks into the issues of the medium of instruction in Pakistan.

Pakistan, a multiethnic and populous country which is also a part of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) group of countries, faces issues

of medium of instruction. Pakistan is a multilingual country which has a rich traditional history. Five indigenous languages are spoken in Pakistan, namely Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, Punjabi and Saraiki whereas the national language is Urdu and the official language is English. It is observed that more than one option is available as medium of instruction in this country. In most of the public schools, the medium of instruction is Urdu where as in private schools, it is English. In addition, medium of instruction differs from one nation to another. However, it is observed that the issues in the medium of instruction tend to have a negative impact on the learning outcomes of students and on their literary skills in different developing and developed countries, including Pakistan This study will be looking at the controversy of medium of instruction in Pakistan that is known to the general public in this country, along with the issues that are a part of this controversy.

Literature Review

Since ages, attainment of educational goals has been the major focus of theorists, educationists, governments, policy makers and researchers. An example is of the fourth goal of the sustainable development goals and that is quality education. Some of these educational goals such as quality education depend on the medium of instruction that is used in educational institutions. Pflapsen & Pallangyo (2019) refer to the medium of instruction as the language in which educational instructors impart their knowledge and instructions to the students within an educational setting. The selection of a suitable language as the medium of instruction is vital for the effective teaching and learning of the curriculum. The learning process of students is dependent on the right selection of language for the medium of instruction. A language that is widely understood by students and that is in sync with the expertise of the teachers with regards to that language, should be used as the medium of instruction. This would eliminate the problems that are otherwise associated with the language of instruction. A nation cannot achieve higher literacy and learning outcomes if the policy makers and the government do not focus on the language of instruction issues.

Language is an important identity marker. However, it is now used for political and economic interests. In present times, language is viewed as means through which

different parties and individuals gain power and pressurize others. In the case of developing countries such as Pakistan, not only local dialects but the English language is also used to get power and to have a domineering attitude with other individuals. In Pakistan, the total number of languages excluding the English language, are 72 (Coleman, 2010). The total number of dialects are more than 300. (Asif, Afzal, & Bashir, 2020). According to official government data, 44.15% of Pakistan's population considers Punjabi as the mother tongue where as 15.42% give this status to the Pashto language. Moreover, Siraiki by 10.53%, Urdu by 7.57%, Sindhi by 4.10%, Balochi by 3.57% where as other language is spoken as mother tongue by 4.66% of Pakistan's population (Government of Pakistan, 2001; Tamim, 2014).

However, according to recent studies, there are total 72 languages that are spoken in Pakistan and from 72 languages, 14 languages are used by 85% of the population whereas the other 58 languages are used by the remaining 15% of the population (Coleman, 2010). This wide variety in languages creates problems when the language which is chosen as the medium of instruction in educational institutions is different from the language that is spoken by students. In such cases, students face difficulties in grasping the subject or the topic that is taught in class. Some researchers suggest that the mother tongue should be used as the medium of instruction. If this is the case, the usage of the second language will not act as a hurdle in achieving higher educational outcomes as students will already have familiarity with the language that is used as the medium of instruction. On the other side, if the language of instruction is different from the national language or the mother tongue then some teachers might also face such issues. This can be in the case when the teachers are not fully immersed in the language or who are not that fluent in that particular language. There are at times a lack of skilled teachers who are capable to teach in the language of instruction in educational settings. Studies suggest that issues of the language of instruction revolves around the problems of inequality, social participation and access (Tamim, 2014).

Nations need to focus on language issues in order to ensure the progress and improvement in the education system. USAID (2020) suggests that the usage of first language as the language of instruction eliminates the issues that otherwise rise due to

the selection of second language as the language of instruction. This would not only increase the access to education but also enhance the educational efficiency by reducing the number of school or college dropouts. Moreover, it would result in higher literacy outcomes and an increase in the level of parental involvement in education.

Empirical findings show that that solving these issues help in attaining higher educational outcomes and the fourth goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that is quality education and lifelong learning for everyone (Pflepsen & Pallangyo, 2019).

Methodology

The nature of this investigation is qualitative. The study has analyzed the problems of Pakistan's instructional medium by using data from secondary sources. Information has been gathered from national and international publications, studies, reports, and records, including information from the government of Pakistan. The people who live in Pakistan who are thought to be directly or professionally active in the education sector—as teachers, students, administrators, or policymakers—are included in the target group for this purpose. To provide light on the concerns made by those who are either impacted by or concerned about the medium of instruction as a whole, an examination of newspapers and reports was also conducted.

History of Urdu Language

Throughout the British colonial period, Urdu was the language that was mentioned in the policies regarding education. It was selected as the language of instruction for the working class whereas English was chosen as the medium of instruction for the higher income groups. In 1980s, this policy received a lot of criticism as it separated the residents of Punjab from their sociolinguistic roots (Coleman, 2010). According to some researchers, English language which was also the language of the colonialists at that time, was imposed as a sign of power of the colonialists whereas the Urdu language which was not that much popular in the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh), was imposed due to the prejudice of the Hindus, political fear of Punjabi identity and for the ease of the administrative unit (Soofi, 2019). The people of Punjab did not receive education in Punjabi language due to which the next generations no longer had complete knowledge or access to the Punjabi folk culture. Similarly, the Hindu Punjabis and the

Muslim Punjabis were unable to get education in Sanskrit language and Persian languages, respectively. This weakened the Punjabi culture and the other cultures as people either had less or no access to the folk stories and the literary sources that were related to different cultures and which could only be passed on to the next generations if the medium of instruction in educational institutions and the first language is the same. The following table 1 shows the evolution of Pakistan's policies regarding the language in education since the time of independence in 1947:

Table 1: The Coleman Report, 2010 (Source)

Year	Event	Policy	Implementation
Pre 1947	Colonial Rule	Urdu Medium for masses; English Medium for elite	As Policy
1947	Independence	Urdu declared to be National Language	Urdu Medium for masses; English Medium for elite
1959	Sharif Commission	Primary & Secondary Education in Urdu; Higher Education in English	No change
1973	New Constitution	English to be replaced b Urdu within 15 years; Provinces free to develop their own language policies	No change
1977	Coup by Zia-ul-Haq	Islamization & Urduisation	English taught from Year 4; Schools begin to prepare for complete Urduisation of exams by 1989; Private English Medium Schools begin to grow
1989	Benazir Bhutto Elected	English to be taught from Year 1	Little effective change
1998	New Education Policy	No Statement regarding language policy	Private English Medium Schools flourish
1999	Coup by Pervaiz Musharaf	English to be taught from Year 1 'where teachers are available'	Little effective change
2007	White Paper	English to be taught rom Year 1; Mathematics and Science to be taught through English from Year 6	Little effective change; In Punjab Science taught through English starting in Year 4 starting from April 2009
2009	National Education Policy	Science and Mathematics to be taught through English in Years in 4 and 5; All Science and Mathematics to be taught through English from 2014	Punjab declares Science to be taught through English starting in Year 4 from April 2009

The commonality in all of these changes in language with regards to education is that these changes were not implemented effectively. The table mainly displays how the medium of instruction continuously shifted from Urdu to English and from English to Urdu again. It also shows the failure of the policies in terms of implementation. During the time of independence, the language problem took place as Urdu was announced as Pakistan's official language by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Bengali Khwaja Nazimuddin. The official business in the country was conducted in English. The declaration of Urdu language as the national language led to outcry and uproar throughout the country. According to the Bengalis who resided in East Pakistan, the decision was not fair. The viewpoint of the Bengalis was that since the Bengali population constituted 56% of East Pakistan population so along with Urdu, the Bengali language should also be made the official language of Pakistan. Dr. Shahidullah, a Bengali scholar, suggested in his book, 'Pakistani Rashtra Bhasha Bangla na Urdu' that the Bengali language should be made the medium of instruction in East Pakistan and the official language along with Urdu in overall Pakistan. Eventually on 7th May 1954, the Constituent Assembly gave votes in favor of the Bengali language and after two years, in 1956, Bengali was announced as the official state language along with Urdu by the National Assembly of Pakistan.

The 1973 Constitution

On 10th April 1973, the National Assembly of Pakistan passed the constitution. Over the years, changes have been made in the constitution. The section of national language in the 1973 constitution of Pakistan sheds light on different language policies. Firstly, it declares Urdu as the national language and orders to make arrangements for its official and unofficial use within fifteen years. Secondly, it allows the use of the English language till the time when arrangements for the use of the Urdu language have been made. Lastly, it provides authority to the Provincial Assembly to take measures with regards to the use and promotion of a provincial language in educational settings in Pakistan (The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973; Ahmed, 2011). The 1956, 1961 and the 1973 constitutions of Pakistan include clear statements and policies regarding Urdu as the national language of Pakistan.

Language Controversies

Before the independence of Pakistan, language was treated as an ethnic identity marker and was used by individuals and parties for economic, religious and political interests (Rahman, 1996). The Urdu language was used by Muslims and the Hindi language was used by Hindus for such purposes. Soon afterwards, issues of language in the education and market sector began to arise. The first clash in terms of language took place between Urdu and Bengali. The Bengalis who lived in East Pakistan wanted the Bengali language to be given the same status as the Urdu language with regards to the language of instruction in Pakistan. The dispute between Bengalis and Muslims concerning the fight for language continued in Pakistan and the Urdu speakers played a dominant role in it. In 1973, Urdu was declared as the national language in the National Assembly of Pakistan. In 1955, the One Unit Scheme announced Urdu as the language of instruction. The scheme proved to be a source of discontent for the smaller provinces of Pakistan (Alvi & Shaheen, 2020). The status of provincial languages was lowered to that of regional languages. This had an adverse impact on the Sindhi ethnonationalism as it was no longer used as the language of instruction after grade 6. The emergence of regional identities in 1971 led to the introduction of the Sindhi Language Act in 1972. The rise in class issues eventually pushed nationalism into the background. The following table 2 shows the languages which are spoken by minimum one million individuals of Pakistan:

Table 2: The Coleman Report, 2010 (Source)

Sr. No.	Language Name	Speakers (millions)	Percentage of Population
1	Punjabi, Western	60.6	38.3
2	Sindhi	18.5	11.7
3	Sairaiki*	13.8	8.7
4	Urdu	10.7	6.8
5	Pashto, Northern	9.6	6.1
6	Pashto, Central	7.9	5.0
7	Balochi, Southern	2.8	1.8
8	Brahui	2.0	1.3

9	Hindko, Northern	1.9	1.2
10	Balochi, Eastern	1.8	1.1
11	Pashto, Southern	1.4	0.9
12	Balochi, Western	1.1	0.7
13	Farsi, Eastern	1.0	0.6
14	Punjabi, Mirpur	1.0	0.6
	Subtotal	134.1	84.8
	58 other languages	24.0	15.2
	Total	158.1	100.0

*Also sometimes spelt Seraiki and Siraiki

Ayub Khan's Language Policy

On 26th August 1959, Ayub Khan's Commission on National Education presented a report concerning the language policy in Pakistan. According to the report, Urdu would be used as the language of instruction after grade 6 in Sindhi-medium schools. This led to a dispute regarding the use of the Urdu language and the Sindhi language in educational settings. Similarly, the report stated that Pashto would also no longer be given the status of medium of instruction after grade 5. However, Pashto was still used as the language in which children were educated in certain schools in the rural areas where as most of the schools in the rural parts of Sindh also continued to use the Sindhi language even after grade 6. The bureaucracy and the army showed significant support to

the use of the English language as the medium of instruction in educational settings in Pakistan. The policy also shed light on religious education but only in secular and nationalist terms. It was believed that the religious education would not only promote nationalist objectives but also inculcate the feeling and spirit of tolerance in people (Rahman, 1998).

The report received a lot of criticism from citizens who either had a Sindhi or a Pashto background. Moreover, Ayub Khan was also criticized for his idea of writing all the languages of Pakistan in the Roman script. This policy proposes the idea that the language policy in schools should be approved by the provincial and area governments. It lays emphasis on the provision of opportunities to children who belong to the lower income groups. Moreover, it states the use of any language from grade 1 till 5. However,

it does not mention the language or languages that have to be used after grade 5. Even though a part of the policy is about the freedom to have any language as the medium of instruction from grade 1 till 5 but still the latter part of the policy document orders the use of English as the language of instruction for subjects such as science and mathematics in grade 4 and 5. The policy aims to reduce social stratification by introducing children to the English language at a fairly early age (Coleman, 2010). This would help children to acquire white collar jobs in the future.

The Coleman Report 2010

The report proposes a strategy regarding the use of the English language in schools in Pakistan. It states that the researchers, politicians, public and the state needs to analyze the English language in a broader educational and social context.

According to The Coleman Report, there are certain ethical implications concerning the development strategy for English. It suggests that it is quite important to not overlook these implications. Coleman (2010) states that the almost half of Pakistan's rising population is of school age but most of the children are not in schools. Three fifths of Pakistan's population earns less than \$2 per day. Hence, they are unable to provide funds in order to educate their children. The report has found that most of the parents face financial constraints due to which most of the children are either not sent to school at all or are not kept in schools for a long time so that there would be more individuals contributing to the family income.

Moreover, it has been observed that a poor health of children has adverse impacts on their education. In such cases, the child would then lack behind in his studies due to an increase in absences. Children are less likely to be attentive in class if they are under-nourished. Coleman (2010) examined that the disparity between male and female earnings affects the perception of people with regards to the lower value of educating females in comparison to the higher value of educating males. It can be observed from the table 3 that as compared to males, females are less likely to receive primary, secondary and tertiary education. In most cases, the reason behind this is the lower value of educating females due to lower female earnings as compared to male earnings.

The following table 3 shows the level of participation that is made by both genders in the

education sector in Pakistan:

Table 3: The Coleman Report, 2010 (Source)

	Male	Female	Overall
Primary (net)	73	59	66
Secondary (net)	36	28	32
Tertiary (Gross)	6	5	5

Differences in Educational Systems and Languages

Throughout the years, certain differences can be found in the educational institutions in Pakistan such as the use of language as the medium of instruction. In some places, such differences continue to exist. Following are the different types of schools that can be found all over Pakistan:

Public Urdu Medium Schools

These schools can be found in all the urban and rural parts of the country, except for the remote areas. Children who belong to the lower income groups and who live in heavily populated areas, do not have the opportunity to go to private English medium schools. The only options they have are of public Urdu medium schools or Deeni Madrassahs.

Coleman (2010) states that most of the public Urdu medium schools have relatively poor learning outcomes as compared to the private schools in Pakistan. Moreover, one common problem in such schools is the fact that most of the English teachers use the Urdu language as a medium to teach the English subject along with those subjects that are supposed to be taught in English. This is either because the government school teachers are not proficient in English language or if they are then they are not confident with regards to their English language proficiency. However, such schools provide free of cost education and even provide textbooks to children for which they don't have to pay.

Private English Medium Schools

In Pakistan, two types of private English medium schools can be found and they are private elite English medium schools and private non-elite English medium schools.

The private elite English medium schools are quite few. They provide good quality education in English medium to a small yet powerful higher income group. However, such schools are out of reach for most of the people due to the high fees that is charged. In comparison to the private elite English medium schools, the private non-elite English medium schools are neither small in number nor do they charge a high fee. These schools can be found in both the heavily populated and the developed areas of the country. Coleman (2010) states that it is expected that at primary level, one in every three enrolled children would be in a private school by the end of the year 2050. Most of the children who belong to the middle-income groups prefer to go to the private non-elite English medium schools than others. Such schools tend to be captivating for families because of being an English medium school that is within their reach in terms of fees, even though at times some private non-elite English medium schools are not able to completely fulfill their claims of being an efficient English medium school.

Madrassahs

Deeni Madrassahs provide Islamic education. Such institutions do not charge any fees at all. Moreover, such Madrassahs are quite attractive for some individuals as it provides accommodation and food to the students. Such factors act as a bonus point for the poverty-stricken families. The medium of instruction in such institutions is mainly Arabic and, in some places, it is Urdu. Such institutions do not use the English language at all and so the students of such institutions are not only deprived of receiving the same education as others but will also be deprived of future job opportunities that will be majorly dependent on the use and proficiency in English language. Their focus is purely on religious education. The Deeni Madrassahs are split up into five types on sectarian and political terms and they are Jamaat-e-Islami, Sunni (Bareili), Shia, Sunni (Deobandi) and Ahle Hadith or Salafi.

Significance of Language in Education

Language plays a significant role in the different aspects of an individual's life. Its use is not just limited to communication but its role spreads to the vast branches of knowledge and information. Language is a significant part of the teaching methods, educational strategies, students' understanding regarding the lectures and the overall

educational system in a country. It is the key factor on which the quality of the education depends. According to different researchers, language has a fundamental impact on the effective teaching and learning of teachers and students (Wyse & Hayward, 2017; M.Zedan, 2013).

In Pakistan, different policies have been introduced over the years with regards to the language of instruction in educational settings. With changing governments came changing educational policies. However, it is observed that the selection of the right language as the medium of instruction is essential for a good quality education system. In cases when a language which is not suitable as a medium of instruction is chosen then it not only impacts the teaching patterns but the student's understanding as well. During such times, students turn towards the option of rote learning and memorization. Hence, the importance of language in education can be observed as these two are interlinked.

Adjusting to Changing Parameters

Dream Policy

The Coleman Report includes a dream policy with regards to the language in education in Pakistan. This policy is considered to be the perfect policy for Pakistan in terms of language in education. It looks at different areas and gives suggestions accordingly. Firstly, it suggests that for the nursery classes and for the first three years of primary education, the medium of instruction can be any one of the seven languages, including Urdu (Coleman, 2010). It states that once children have become competent in both reading and writing then they could be introduced to the Urdu language. Secondly, students from grade 3 till 5 can gradually reduce the use of home language and eventually shift to the Urdu language completely. It is vital for students to achieve competence in the Urdu language in terms of reading and writing. According to the dream policy, the students can still study their home language but as a separate subject.

Thirdly, the policy states that if this pattern is followed that by grade 6, students will be completely competent in the Urdu language and so they can be introduced to both the Latin script and the English language. From grade 6 till grade 9, English can be studied and taught as a separate subject in schools. Moreover, from grade 10 the students can use English as the medium of instruction while still having the option to take Urdu and their

home languages as separate subjects. Lastly, according to the dream policy, the educational institutions must test students for entry tests on the basis of their functional competence in all three languages (Coleman, 2010). This would make the policy more effective.

Conclusion

An important factor in a nation's growth and prosperity is education. A nation's ability to transition from a developing to a developed state, or to compete with the world's most developed nations, depends on its ability to provide high-quality education and a workforce with an advanced education. An efficient and effective teaching medium is essential to providing a country with high-quality education. In Pakistan, a high level of importance is given to the language of instruction in educational settings. However, with the change in government, the policies regarding the language of instruction also changed. Throughout independence, the colonial era English and Urdu policy regarding the national language and official language stayed the same. However, it is argued that this policy has also made significant contributions in the cultural instability in Pakistan. Many people such as the Punjabis, Hindus and Bengalis seem to have been cut off from their literary sources.

According to some researchers, in most cases the home language or the mother tongue is the best medium of instruction (EducationLinks, 2020). This is because children are familiar with that particular language since they are born and so they are able to have a good understanding of the lectures that are taught in schools. It is observed that the use of the first language as the medium of instruction leads to higher educational outcomes, equity, increase in the involvement of parents in the education of their children and lower dropout or repetition rates.

There are many issues and loopholes that one can easily spot in the education system of Pakistan. One of the main issues in Pakistan's education system is the issue of the medium of instruction. The medium keeps changing with the changing policies and governments and it is continuously used for advancing the political interests of some individuals and parties. Hence, as a nation it is vital for us to dig a little deeper into these issues and stick to only one policy and language as the medium of instruction. This will

not only improve the educational system of Pakistan but will also allow this country to compete with other countries of the world with regards to education

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