

# **Native Languages and Education in Balochistan: A Bottom-Up Analysis of Theory and Practice**

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## **Abstract**

Positive cognitive outcomes, enrichment of minority languages, culture and ethnolinguistic identity are often associated with learning of native languages but, more than 65 to 77 native languages across the country are suffering in every government department particularly in education. This study examines the role and importance of native languages from theory to its practice in education, and to explore the opinions of teachers about getting education in native languages particularly at early stages, in multilingual Balochistan. The Bottom-up approach will enable us to investigate the concern and opinions of teachers. Mostly, teachers remain blind followers of the policies mandated by the language policy planners. Employing mixed methods, the study investigates the views of teachers in 30 government schools in three districts of Balochistan. The data (quantitative and qualitative) overwhelmingly endorse the importance of native languages in education particularly in the development of cognitive skills in students at early stages of their education. They further argue that teaching of native languages in government schools will only be successful if they teach them as a language rather than as a subject. The study concludes that the policy about native language needs to be reviewed, taking into account their importance in the learning of subject matter easily and quickly. In the end, the study proposes a dynamic policymaking mechanism where all the stakeholders from both the top to bottom could coordinate in the policy formulation about native languages and its effective implementation.

**Keywords:** Native languages, Language Planning and Policy, Language-in-education policy, Multilingualism, Language-as-a-resource

## **1. Introduction**

A young student becomes literate when he/she starts connecting the idea behind a word with its written form. Whereas, if the same student can speak or write a word but do not understand the word, only rote learning will happen. As Pennycook (2001) defines literacy as “the process of linking the ideas associated with spoken words to written text”. In other words, cognitive skills only develop in students’ home/native languages. In contrast, education in school language leads to cramming, poor performance in studies and often resulted in students’ dropout from schools particularly in rural areas (Pinnock & Vijayakumar, 2009). Among the 7,097 known languages across the globe (Simons & Fennig, 2019), less than 500 languages are used and taught in schools (Hornberger, 2008) and 2,464 languages are listed as endangered languages (Moseley, 2010). Consequently, the majority of students are getting education other than their home language. In such countries where language-in-education is mostly either in national or in the official language, the survival of native languages becomes a great challenge across the world, when the government’s machinery, institutional supports to the official or national languages make them ladder to socio-economic upward mobility and bright future. Whereas, language policy massively fails to improve the status of native languages and speakers, leaving them illiterate and oppressed in their own land (Hornberger, 2008).

The article 29 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states:

“All education programmes for Indigenous children and youth [should provide mother tongue medium instruction] based on the insights from solid research over many years [that show] that mainly mother tongue medium bilingual education (MTM) is superior to all other forms of education practices in order to achieve

literacy and generally effective learning, including ‘the development of the child’s personality talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential’(cited in Hirvonen, 2008)

Literature associates education in native languages with positive cognitive outcomes, enrichment of minority language, culture and ethnolinguistic identity (Baker, 2001). Nettle and Romaine (2000) termed native languages as ‘verbal botanics’ because they carry within them a wealth of knowledge about the local culture, history, traditions, and arts. Kamwangamalu (2008) viewed that ‘a man’s native language is almost like his shadow, inseparable from his personality’ when a language is lost, much of the wealth of knowledge it embodies is also lost. Cummins’ (1984) ‘Interdependence theory’ suggested that the acquisition of second language/foreign language in bi/multilingual settings depends on the level of development of students’ first language/mother tongue. When the first language has developed sufficiently well to cope with decontextualized classroom learning, a second language may be relatively easily acquired. When the first language is less developed, or where there is an attempted replacement of the first language by the second language (e.g. in the classroom), the development of the second language may be relatively impeded (as cited in Baker, 2001). There are many types of bilingual education according to various scholars. For example, Baker’s (2001) weak forms and strong forms that aim bilingualism and biliteracy. Skutnabb-Kangas (cited in Kamwangamalu, 2008) stated that a good educational program should be able to accomplish:

“... high levels of multilingualism; a fair chance of achieving academically at school; strong, positive multilingualism and multicultural identity and positive attitude towards self and others; and a fair chance of awareness and competence building as prerequisites for working for a more equitable world, for oneself and one’s own group as well as others, locally and globally.”

On contrary to education in native languages, education in school language is linked with rote learning, weak in studies and often resulted students’ dropout from schools (Pinnock & Vijayakumar, 2009). According to the same authors, in multilingual countries, a large proportion of students are out of the school where national or international languages are used as school language. For instance, a total of 54 million out-of-school children live in ‘highly linguistically fractionalized’ countries and 58% students belonging to primary-school-aged group. The most linguistically fractionalized countries contain 72% of out-of-school children around the globe. Similarly, in India Panda and Mohanty (2009) criticize the language-in-education policies as a whole, which they believe exclude tribal children in Orissa state from crucial mainstreams “social, political, economic, and educational domains, leading to serious language disadvantage of tribal children and large-scale failure and ‘push out’ in dominant language classrooms, where their mother tongues have little space. Further, MacKenzie (2009) concludes in her study that in the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Orissa, the drop out ratio among the tribal children are quit high verses their performance in school comparing to other children due to lack of mother tongue education. The learning and teaching of native languages depends on several interconnected factors such as the political will, economic returns, grassroots support, involvement of non-governmental organizations, availability, and allocation of human and material resources, and many more (Kamwangamalu, 2008).

## **2. Demography of Balochistan**

Demographically, Balochistan hosts only 5% of the country’s population. According to the census 2017, the population of Balochistan is only 12.34 million (Government-of-Pakistan, 2017). Moreover, it is the home to many ethnic groups and languages such as Pashto, Balochi,

Brahui, Persian, Sindhi, Punjabi, Urdu, Seraiki, and many other micro languages but it has three main and dominant languages i.e. Pashto Balochi, and Brahui (Government-of-Balochistan, 2011, 2013).

## **2.1 Language policies in Pakistan**

Since 1947, the central government has issued at least 22 major educational reports and language policies (Rahman, 2004). But, all these language policies have constantly been changed and reversed throughout history. Thus, the researchers termed them as ‘dilemma’ (Mansoor, 2004) and ‘enigma and conundrum’ (Mustafa, 2011). From 1947 to 2018 all the language policies mostly focused and promoted English and Urdu languages and put aside native languages of the country which represent 92% of the population (Manan, David, & Dumanig, 2015). After the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in the constitution on April 19, 2010, devolved education department to provinces along with many others (Siddiqui, 2010). Onward, language policy and planning, curriculum designing, syllabus designing and standards of education will fall under the purview of the provinces (Government-of-Balochistan, 2013, 2014; Siddiqui, 2010).

## **2.2 Educational policies in Balochistan**

After the 18th amendment, along with many other departments education was also devolved to the provinces. Now language policy planning, curriculum, syllabus and textbooks designing, provision of quality and standard education, and Islamic education all lineup with National Education Policy 2009, and which are now the provincial subjects. The first educational report of the province after 18th amendment was, Education for All Plan Balochistan 2011-2015 published by the education department Balochistan. The aim of this report was to provide quality education, early childhood education (ECE), primary education and to promote adult literacy in the province to eradicate poverty in the province (Government-of-Balochistan, 2011).

Balochistan Education Sector Plan (2013) was the first step toward policy planning and implementation strategies in the education sector. This report aims to provide free quality education, on the basis of equity, across all the children of Balochistan with strict monitoring of the policy plans. The education institutions include schools, colleges, universities, and *Madaris* (religious seminaries).

The final report, Balochistan Education Sector Plan (2014) is a comprehensive document which discussed many new areas than previous reports. It discussed the current situation of education suggested policy recommendations, implementations strategies to overcome the issues in formal schooling (preprimary, primary, elementary, secondary, and higher secondary education) and policy documents (curriculum and textbooks) and teachers training (pre-service and in-service), providing facilities (buildings, drinking water, toilets, electricity) and students learning development facilities (libraries and laboratories), bringing equity and quality to both public and private education setups and ensuring fair and effective assessments in examinations.

It is the first report in the province which gives immense importance and role to native languages in education. The sector plan explained that the previous language policies were based on “unrealistic assumptions, students learning processes, learners need and teachers’ competency in public schools” (Government-of-Balochistan, 2014). Further, the sector plan stated that the NEP 2009 gave immense importance to English language and Urdu. Urdu is the communication language of the country and Balochistan but it cannot be treated as the mother tongues of students in the province. This policy failed to accommodate new learners of the school language. Moreover, due to the same policy, the students at secondary level or higher secondary level failed to learn both the languages (English and Urdu) just because they have poor cognitive development in the absence of mother tongues based medium-of-instruction policy. In addition,

the students also failed due to poor teaching practices and unrealistic courses at higher classes. The BESP (2013-18) drew a separate language-in-education framework for students of primary, middle, secondary and higher secondary as per their needs in Balochistan. The base of this policy is:

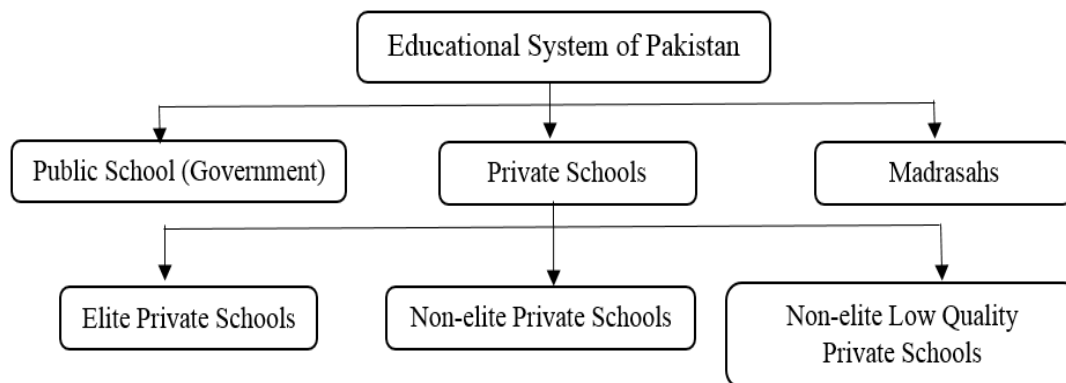
- (a) Mother tongues will be taught at primary level to improve cognitive skills of the students. Mother tongues will also be encouraged at middle and secondary levels.
- (b) English and Urdu will be introduced at later stages (unknown from which Grade or level). Separate curricular courses for those students who are learning English or Urdu at later stages as compared to children who start learning the language in early stages.

But, the sector plan failed to implement in practice.

### 2.3 Educational setup in Balochistan

The educational system of Balochistan is similar to the country. As the National Education Policy 2009, divides the educational system of Pakistan into three main streams i.e. public sector schools, private sector schools and *Madrassahs* (religious seminaries). The private sector schools are further divided into: (a) elite private schools, (b) the non-elite schools and (c) non-elite low quality private schools (Government-of-Pakistan, 2009). The Figure 1.2 illustrates the educational system of Pakistan.

**Figure 2: Educational Systems**



Source: (Zia-ur-Rehman, 2018)

Many scholars across the country have discussed the educational system of the country in details Government-of-Pakistan (2009); Coleman (2010); Manan (2015); Rahman (2008); Zia-ur-Rehman (2018) and many others.

### 2.4 Current educational situation in Balochistan

Balochistan has the lowest literacy ratio in the country by comparing it with other provinces which is 41% for the year 2016-17 (Government-of-Pakistan, 2018). According to the same source, the male literacy rate is 56% whereas the female literacy rate is just 24%. Moreover, the urban literacy rate is 61% whereas the rural literacy rate is just 33%. It also has the highest ratio of the gender gap with very low enrolment rate in the country (Government-of-Balochistan, 2014) and the highest dropout ratio in the country. the dropout rate of Balochistan (from Grade 01 to Grade 12) is significantly higher than other provinces of Pakistan. According to Pakistan Education Statistics (2016), the total out of school children ratio of the province is 1,891,596 (70%) in which male students are 909,171 (63%) and female students 982,424 (78%). However, the ratio in Alif-Ailaan's report is higher than in the previous report 75% (SDPI & Alif-Ailaan,

2016). As the data from above reveal that the educational situation in Balochistan is worse and the quality of education is very poor. The increasing growth of private schools in the province indicates the low-quality education and low confidence of people over the government schools in the province.

## **2.5 Linguistic landscape of Balochistan**

Though, Balochistan is home to only 5% of the population of the country but, many languages are spoken here. The people here speak Pashto, Balochi, Brahui, Urdu, Sindhi, Punjabi, Persian and other micro languages. But, the major languages are Pashto, Brahui, and Balochi which are the major languages here. The people of the province can speak and understand two or more native languages (Government-of-Balochistan, 2019). The linguistic hierarchy of Balochistan is as under:

### **2.5.1 English**

English language enjoys the status of an official language, the most authoritative and esteemed language in the province. The language is used in all the important domains of the provincial government like law and bureaucracy, commerce and media, education and many other departments. Due to the economic value of English language, it is considered as 'passport to privileges' and a prominent career. It is perceived as a ladder for socioeconomic upward mobility for those who have English language proficiency and education (Channa, 2014; Coleman & Capstick, 2012; Manan et al., 2015; Manan, David, & Dumanig, 2016; Shamim, 2011; Zia-ur-Rehman, 2018). Similarly, Mahboob (2002) affirms that the English language is necessary for a bright future because there is no future without English language in Pakistan. Rahman (1997) views that English language is the language of power and social status, it is a gateway to the white-collar and elitist jobs in the country. On the other hand, English language excludes those from the job market who are educated in Urdu or in other native languages (Coleman & Capstick, 2012). English language is taught as a foreign language in Balochistan.

### **2.5.2 Urdu**

The national constitution of Pakistan declared that the Urdu language is the national language of Pakistan in article 251 (Government-of-Pakistan, 1973). Mansoor (2004) explains that Urdu is a symbol of unity and identity across the country. It welds the people of Pakistan in one whole and avoids separation and regional or provincial autonomy (Government-of-Pakistan, 2009). Urdu language is the lingua franca of the country and of the province. It is the language of media (print and electronic) radio, and most importantly Urdu is the medium of instruction in public/government schools and low fee private schools across the country (Coleman, 2010; Government-of-Pakistan, 2009; Manan & David, 2014; Mustafa, 2015). However, Urdu language is the mother tongue of very tiny portion of the population i.e. 7.56 % (Government-of-Pakistan, 1998).

### **2.5.3 Native language of Balochistan**

As it is discussed above, Balochistan is home to many languages such as Pashto, Balochi, Brahui, Sindhi, Punjabi, Urdu, Persian, Seraiki and many other micro languages. But, here we will discuss the major/'Environment languages' (Mustafa, 2015) of the province.

#### **2.5.3.1 Pashto**

Pashto, also known as Pakhto, Pashtu, and Pushto, is a member of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family (Simons & Fennig, 2019). It is spoken in, Pakistan, Afghanistan and a large diaspora encompassing India, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States and many other countries of the world (Government-of-Balochistan, 2014, 2019). According to an estimate it is spoken by around 50 million people worldwide and

according to the census of Pakistan 1998, there is 15.42% population of Pakistan speaking the language (Government-of-Pakistan, 1998). Pashto language is divided into various dialects such as Southern, Central, Northern Pashto (Simons & Fennig, 2019).

### **2.5.3.2 Balochi**

Balochi language is also a member of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. It is spoken in, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and a large number of migrated people in United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, other Arabian countries, Europe and other countries of the world (Government-of-Balochistan, 2014, 2019; Simons & Fennig, 2019). According to the census of Pakistan 1998, Balochi language is spoken by 3.57% population in Pakistan (Government-of-Pakistan, 1998). Balochi language is also divided into various dialects such as Eastern, Southern, Western Balochi (Simons & Fennig, 2019).

### **2.5.3.3 Brahui**

Brahui language is a member of the Dravidian language family. It is widely spoken in Balochistan and Sindh provinces of Pakistan and in some countries of Arabian Peninsula, Afghanistan and Iran (Government-of-Balochistan, 2014, 2019). According to Ethnologue; languages of the world (2019) the total number of speakers of Brahui language in Pakistan are 2,210,000 and in the world are 2,433,600. According to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, Brahui is included in the list of endangered languages in the category of 'vulnerable' which is defined as "most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g., home)" (Moseley, 2010).

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study employs Bottom-up/Dynamic Approach, a new approach in the field of Language Planning and Policy emerged which Menken and García (2010) describe as "the new wave of language education policy research" (p.02). Previously, Language Planning and Policy was regarded as a linear process, where top-level entities such as government officials and ministries who were in the center gave directives to teachers and educators to follow their prescribed policies. But, in contrast to this dominant approach, Menken and García (2010) put the teachers and educators in the center of LPP, Manan (2015) explains regarding the bottom-up analysis that, it is "providing alternative insights of how teachers from around the globe can enact, adapt, or transform language policies to their own context, beliefs, and constraints" and how the teachers, stir this onion (LPP) by locating ideological and implementational spaces within their own practices (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). The dynamic approach focuses on teachers and educators to whom Shohamy (2006) called 'soldiers of the system', as language policymakers, rather than just blind followers who implement policies mandated from government officials (Menken & García, 2010). Bottom-up approach shifts the role of government officials (macro-level) in language planning and policy to educators and teachers in policy planning at micro-level. Though, there is little scholarship on the dynamic approach, but its proponents stress on that language policy should be assumed from classrooms (Canagarajah, 2005; Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Ramanathan, 2005; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). The research objectives of this study are:

- i. To explore the views of government schools' teachers about importance and role of native languages in education in Balochistan
- ii. To investigate the orientations of government schools' teachers about institutional challenges in the implementation of native languages.

#### 4. Methodology

This study took place in 30 government schools in three districts i.e. Quetta, Killa Abdullah and Mastung of Balochistan. Quetta is the capital city of Balochistan province. It is highly multiethnic and multilingual district of the province where various languages are spoken such as Pashtu, Balochi, Brahui, Sindhi, Punjabi, Persian, Urdu and many other micro native languages. Whereas Killa Abdullah is majorly Pashto dominant district and Mastung is Brahui and Balochi dominant district. The study draws on mixed-method research (Concurrent Triangulation Research Design) which combines and uses the strengths and overcomes the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell, 2009; Dörnyei, 2007). Numerous research instruments such as survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and observation are used during data collection process. The questionnaire survey elicited 187 teachers' information concerning their views regarding the importance and role of native languages in education. The questionnaire items were translated into Urdu language in order to achieve face validity. Maximum variation sampling was used for the questionnaire survey. Whereas 14 semi-structured interviews were conducted in all three districts to triangulate the data. The interviews were taken in Urdu and Pashto languages in order to remove the language barrier and create a friendly atmosphere to get real data. Purposive sampling was employed during the collection of qualitative data. The quantitative data were analyzed with the help of SPSS version 21 to draw descriptive statistics computing percentages, frequencies, and ratios. Interview transcription and classroom observations were used to help in the thematic analysis and to supplement the questionnaire data. The observation of classroom pedagogy was of non-participant nature. It covered 06 classes in 4 different schools, which made up 210 minutes in total.

#### 5. Discussion

##### 5.1 Polyglossia and compartmentalization of languages in Balochistan

During the observation of classes, it was known that the students in the province become bi/multilingual reaching the age of 10-12 years. But, this bi/multilingualism is only limited to speaking and listening of the languages rather than reading and writing. The decision of inclusion of native languages in education was taken in the light 18<sup>th</sup> amendment in the national constitution of the county. Thus, native languages became a part of the school curriculum and the teaching started in 2014-2015. Similarly, the Arabic language is only limited to reading rather than speaking, writing, listening and understanding and used only for religious purposes. The compartmentalization of languages is shown in the following table 1.

**Table 1: Compartmentalization of Languages**

Context	English	Urdu	Arabic	Native Languages (Pashto, Balochi, Brahui)
Home and family				✓
At school	✓	✓	✓	✓
For communication at school				✓
Social and cultural activities in community				✓
Correspondence with friends and relatives				✓
Religious activities			✓	
Mass media (TV, Newspaper)		✓		

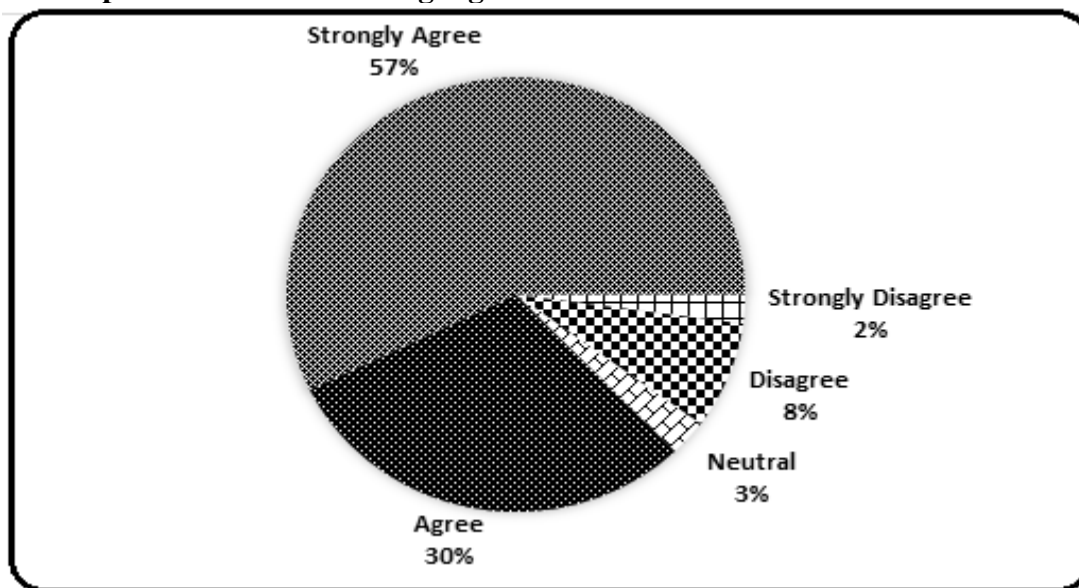
Most of the students learn Urdu after reaching Grade 6 to Grade 8. They can speak, listen, read, write and understand the language but weak in creative writing at this stage. The National

Education Policy (2009) made English to be taught as a compulsory subject from Grade one in schools. But, the students have limited proficiency even after passing secondary or higher secondary exams. They can read and copy English text but their speaking, listening, understanding, and creative writing skills are very poor.

## 5.2 Importance of Native Languages: Teachers' Views

The majority of respondents as shown in figure 3 were either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that native language due to their immense importance in education should be taught in government schools along Urdu and English languages. Very few respondents were disagreed and strongly disagreed.

**Figure 3: Importance of Native Language in Education**



On the other hand, the qualitative data also supported the aforementioned quantitative data regarding the role of native languages in learning. All the participants were agreed that native languages have a very important role in learning and they also agreed that native language should also be taught along with other languages in government schools, especially in the initial Grades. For instance, a participant explained that “*Madri zubaney tulba kay rozana bolchaal ki zubaney hay. Inhee jo bi mazmoon inn ki madri zabanu may parhay jaeen gay tu wo mazameen inn kay liye seekne may intahai assan hon gay*”. (Mother tongues (native languages) are the communication language of students. Any subject taught to them in their own mother tongue, they will easily understand and learn it.) (TCHR 4). Similarly, another participant described:

“*Madri zubanki misaal aap Angrezi say le sakte hay. Madiri zubaan kiwajah say wo itneeagee hay (British people). Kunkay unhee koi bi cheez dusri zubaan may nahi parhaigae hay. Bache mahol say seekte hay. Jo cheez mahool may mojoood ho wo cheez bache jaldi seektee hay. Zuban bi bachee kay liyebahotahamhasiyatrakti hay. Jis smahoolya jiss zubaan kay saath bacha parwan chahrta hay. Uss zubaan may seekne kay mawaqee zyada hote hay*” (English language can be taken as an example of a mother tongue. Due to mother tongue they (British people and Americans) progressed. Because they do not study anything in any other language. Anything present in the environment, children can easily learn it. In the same way, language is very important for children. Any environment or language in which children grow up, there are a lot of chances for learning) (TCHR 6).



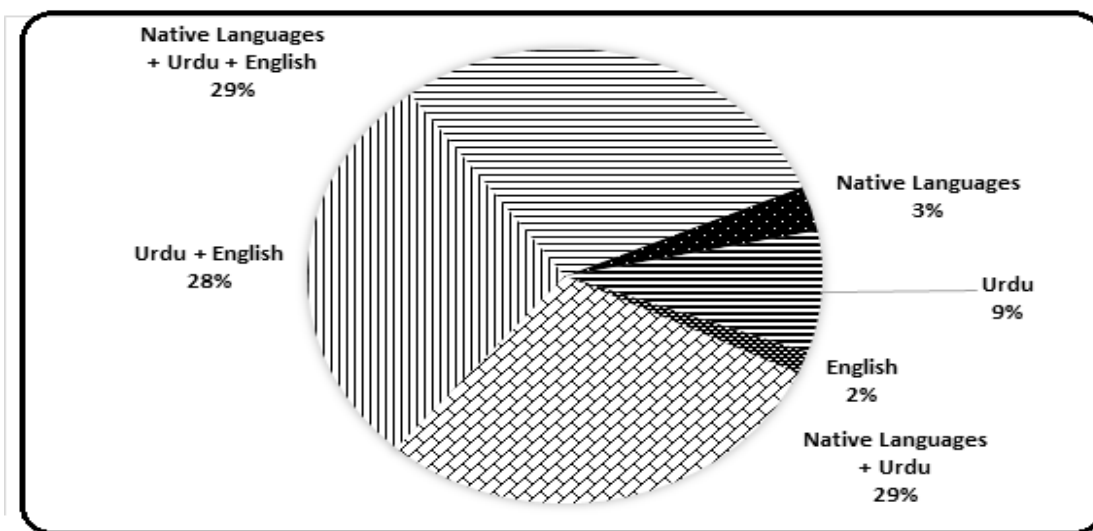
A respondent gave a different reason for using the native languages in schools. He said “*Zmuxh da baad bakhti da chi muxh moranai xhabi ta iss lift na workavo. Deer dasi mulkaan sta balke tol taraqiayafra mulkaan chi aghu taraqi karee da. Da aghu school, college, ao university pa moranai zabaki dai. Deer loi ahmiyat lari moranai zaba*” (It is our bad luck that we forgot our mother tongues (in education). If you see all the developed countries, they have progressed only due to their mother tongues in their schools, colleges, and universities. Mother tongues have get lot of importance (in education)) (TCHR 9).

The respondents in both the qualitative and quantitative data overwhelmingly advocated native languages in government schools, particularly in the initial grades. however, the teaching of native languages needs a comprehensive and sound language-in-education policy. The teaching of native languages should be practiced as a language rather than as a subject. Unfortunately, the province does not have any such policy at the moment. All languages (English, Urdu, Arabic, and one native language) are taught in Grade one. Only two languages, English and Urdu are entirely focused throughout the schooling period. Whereas, the teaching of native languages was started in great hast and for the political point scoring by the provincial government in 2014-15. This study proposes that we can only take benefits from native languages, if we teach only native languages from Grade one to Grade three or four then we can transit to Urdu or English languages later. Moreover, the education department needs either to train existing primary school teachers or to appoint new language teachers who should teach native languages as a subject to develop cognitive skills in students.

### 5.3 Language-in-education Policy at Primary Level

Language-in-education policy is the most powerful and compelling resource to bring language change in a community and it is the “key implementation procedure for language policy and planning” (Kaplan, Baldauf, & Richard, 1997, p. 122). The data in figure 4 shows the largest number of respondents i.e. 55 (29.4%) were in favor of native languages along with Urdu to be taught at the primary level and then 54 (28.9%) respondents were in favor of all three languages i.e. native languages, Urdu, and English at primary level.

Figure 4: Desired Language-in-education Policy at Primary Level In contrast, the qualitative data divided into two different pools of opinions.



Six participants were in favor of native languages, Urdu and English language group. They argued that all three languages are very important for the students because, in native languages, students can learn conceptually, Urdu as a national language and English as an international

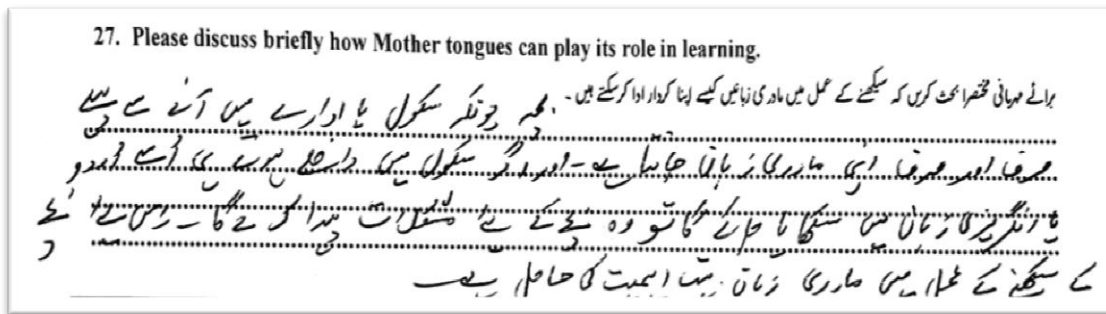
language. For example, a participant explained, “*Primary satah par teen zubaney parhany chahiye. Madri zuban, jabkay Urdu (batur-e-qumi zubaan) aur Angrezi (batur-e-Alami zuban) bi parhany chahiye*” (at the primary section the language in education policy should be in the mother tongue, Urdu as a national language and English as an international language) (TCHR 4). But, the latter group argued and explained that at the primary level in the government schools there should be only two language i.e. native languages and national language (Urdu) because both languages are used as communication languages across the country. For example, a respondent said, “*Primary satah par sirf 2 zubanee istamal honi chahiye, Qumi aur Madri zubane. Kunkay tulba w taalibaat mahool may jo bi zuban istamal kartee hay wo unhee asani say samaj saktee hay. Chahee wo madri zuban ho ya qumi zuban*” (At the primary level, only two languages should be used i.e. National language (Urdu) and Mother tongues (native languages). Because the students use a language or languages in their environment, they can easily learn things in that language. Whether it is the national language or mother tongue.) (TCHR 7).

We cannot ignore the importance of additive bi/multilingualism at students early age because multiple languages in one’s linguistic repertoire will help them in cognitive skill development. For instance, a respondent explained that “*multiple languages pa basic classoki cognition ziyatai*” (multiple languages can improve cognition at early Grades). Unfortunately, here in Balochistan due to the lack of language-in-education policy at primary level classes ignite several interconnected issues: (a) four different languages are taught in Grade one, (b) all these languages are taught in government schools as a subject rather than as a language, (c) native languages considered as source of developing cognitive skills but here they were introduced without any Needs analysis, environment analysis, and the education department has not provided any training session for the teachers, (d) the majority of primary schools i.e. 56% in the province are based on single teachers, in other words a single teacher has to take 42 classes on each day, and (e) majority of primary teachers are non-native speakers, and the problem is how they could be capable of teaching native languages to students.

#### 5.4 Development of Cognitive Skills at Early Stages

As discussed earlier, that native language is like a man’s shadow which cannot separate from his/her personality (Kamwangamalu, 2008). Their importance in education is associated with cognitive skills development, enrichment of minority languages, cultural and ethnolinguistic identity (Baker, 2001). In an open-ended question when the respondents were asked regarding the role of native languages in learning, respondent 37 wrote;

**Figure 5: Views of a Respondent**

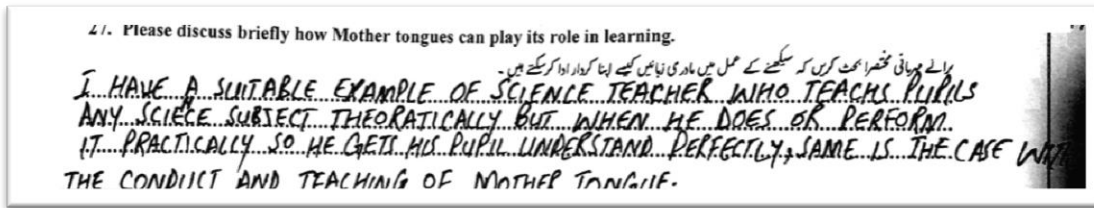


(Before getting

admission into any school or institution, the child only knows his/her mother tongue. When he/she gets admission in school then he starts learning Urdu and English languages which create

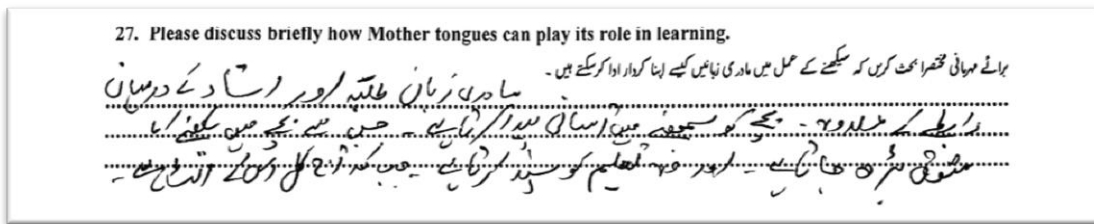
hurdle for them. Therefore, for children learning process mother tongue are very important. RESP 29). Another respondent (116) wrote,

**Figure 6: Views of a Respondent**



Another respondent raised an important point that native languages work as communication languages between students and their teachers. He said that,

**Figure 7: Views of a Respondent**



(Apart from a source of communication, mother tongue makes learning very easy for children. It enhances the interest level of students in learning and then he/she likes to get education. But the situation is reverse nowadays. (RESP 163)).

The majority of respondents were of the opinion that native languages play very important role in learning. They are very important for the development of cognitive skills at the early stages. During the observation of classes, teaching and learning practices, the teachers were the main center of class. They were the only ones who kept speaking in the class (teacher-centered classes), on the other hand, students were mostly silent during the learning practice. The grammar translation method of teaching was the only method of teaching almost in all observed classes. The students’ cognitive skills will only be developed when students became the center of learning practice. Students were involved via various activities in the learning process and most importantly when the native languages along the other languages are taught as a language rather than as a subject. Change in the pedagogy will change the learning practices in the province. It will happen when the education department arrange training sessions for the teachers and native languages will bear its fruits.

### 5.5 Institutional challenges and native languages

Since 2015, the major native languages (Pashto, Balochi, and Brahui) of the province became a part of provincial government school’s curriculum. These native languages were started to be teach from Grade one. But, since the very start they have been facing some serious institutional challenges. The end stakeholders (teachers, parents, and students) have various reservations regarding the abrupt and unplanned introduction of native languages in government schools. Major institutional challenges are as following:

First, the language policies in Pakistan have been constantly changing and reversing throughout history and have been favoring both official language (English) and national language (Urdu) only. Thus, the researchers termed language policies in Pakistan as ‘dilemma’ (Mansoor, 2004) and ‘enigma and conundrum’ (Mustafa, 2011). The teachers, parents and students have their own reservations regarding the introduction of native languages in government schools in the

province. Both parents and students were in favor of only English medium policy in schools as English is a language of higher education and considered as a passport to success (Manan, 2015). On the other hand, teachers who are the frontline force of implementation of language-in-education policy in schools were in favor of native languages in early grades but they were of the opinion that native languages should be taught as a language rather than as a subject.

Second, Needs Analysis, which is an umbrella term, is considered an important step in Curriculum, Syllabus and textbooks designing. According to Hutchinson and Waters (1989) the aim of Needs Analysis is to survey the students 'lacks', 'necessities' and 'wants' and 'the Needs Analysis of teachers teaching capabilities'. As the recruitment of teachers in Balochistan is for the most part associated with corruption, nepotism and political influence (Government-of-Balochistan, 2014). Moreover, the policy of including the teaching of native languages in the province was taken without detailed 'Situation Analysis' (Government-of-Balochistan, 2014), ground realities, teacher teaching capabilities and without providing any training session before or after the introduction of native languages in government schools in province. Therefore, it is very important to know about the teachers and students 'lacks', 'necessities' and 'wants' for the successful and effective implementation of native languages policy at schools particularly in the early Grades to develop cognitive skills.

Third, curriculum which is "a set of courses constituting an area of specialization" (Merriam-Webster-Online-Dictionary, 2018) and it guides and shows the learning pathway to students (Government-of-Pakistan, 2007, 2009). Besides, textbooks which are the basic source of learning for students and most important guideline for teachers. The provincial ministry of education prepared textbooks of native languages for only kindergarten (*Kachi*) without designing curriculum for native languages. As the decision of teaching native languages in Balochistan was taken in great haste and for the number scoring in politics in 2014. Further, the textbooks of native languages were provided for only Grade one (*awal aala*) and Grade two for two years only and the process stopped for higher Grades. In 2018 the education department provided textbooks for only kindergarten and Grade two in very minimum number whereas the Grade one was completely ignored this year. Therefore, in the same year (2018), the teachers in most of the schools stopped teaching native languages due to shortage of textbooks; in the case of students having mixed mother tongues studying in same class; the teachers of the early Grade being non-natives. Surprisingly, neither education department took any action nor enquired about it in their annual inspection of schools. It seems like the teaching of native languages will soon stop in the province.

Last but not least, in recent times only those languages survive and flourish which have economic viability, government, and institutional support. The institutional and governmental support to English and Urdu language made them dominant over the rest of native languages generally in the country and particularly in the province. Until and unless, the provincial and federal government give institutional support and economic viability to native languages like English and Urdu have, all the stakeholders (policymakers, parents, students, and teachers) will happily support the learning and teaching practices. Therefore, low economic viability and less importance to the teaching and learning practices of native languages in government schools are among the major institutional challenges.

### **Conclusion**

Education in native languages particularly at the early stages is very important as the development of cognitive skills and (re)vitalization of identity, language, and culture are linked with it around the world. It is also important as they can easily learn content material in the

language which they use at home and in the community. Both the quantitative and qualitative data supported the aforementioned views. But, the implementation of native language policy seems a Herculean task as the country has failed to produce unanimously acceptable language-in-education policy in more than 70 years. If the education department willing to teach native languages in government schools, they should teach them as a language rather than as a subject in government schools or else it will fail like the teaching of English language. More, the institutional support, sound language-in-education policy, economic viability will pave the way for the teaching and learning practices of native languages in government schools.

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