

## PASHTO MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS: IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### **ABSTRACT.**

*Pashto is an ancient language, spoken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan). Efforts for the Pashto medium of instruction were continued before the existence of Pakistan. For this purpose many prominent personalities presented their unforgettable services. Among these were included politicians, educationists, social workers, religious leaders (ulama). For the promotion of Pashto medium of instruction various projects were, such as Pashto Translation Project, Pashto Dictionary Project, Pak-German Project, IDMC Project, and PEP-ILE. So textbooks and related material were developed which provided ease in implementation of Pashto medium of instruction.*

*The opposition from non-Pashto speakers particularly Hindko speakers performed the most active role as a hurdle in Pashto medium of instruction.*

**Key Words:** Pashto Medium of Instruction, Projects, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

### **Introduction:**

On the ethno linguistic basis there are four major nationalities in Pakistan i.e. the Punjabis live in Punjab, Sindhis in Sindh, Baloch in Balochistan and Pakhtuns live in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Rahman,1995). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa a majority of Pashto speaking people, province of Pakistan, is stretched between the Pak-Afghan

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border (Durand Line) on the west and Indus River on the eastern side (Spain,1963). The population of the province according to the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (previous NWFP) census report 1998 was 17735912 (Government of Pakistan, 2001) and in the Encyclopedia Britannica Published Year Book, 1992 the population of Pakhtuns were 16432780 (13%) in the country (Rahman,1995).

Before the advent of the British (rule) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan), Pashto was the medium of instruction in many academic institutions. The education was provided in these academic institutions in Pashto by Sufis and Saints such as Syed Ali Shah (Pir Baba), Kastir Gul (Kaka Sahib), Akhun din Baba, Syed Abdul Wahab (Akhund Panju Baba) and Abdur Rashid Baba (Akhund Darveza). These Madrassahs trained and educated few celebrities. Among these Khushal Khan Khattak (the national poet of Pashto) was educated in Kaka Sahib Madrassah, while Mian Muhammadi studied in Darul uloom of Mian Chamkani (Khattak,1998).

When Punjab province was annexed by the British in 1849, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region being part of it came under British suzerainty. Subsequently, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa became a separate administrative unit (province) in 1932 by British.

The colonial masters did not promote Pashto language due to their political interests and discouraged all radical attempts, particularly by anti-imperialist politicians (Rahman, 1995).

Famous Pashto, Persian and Arabic scholar and then teacher and grammarian (Pashto) in Punjab University Shamsul ulama Mir Ahmad Shah Rizwani in October 1889, prepared curriculum for 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> classes and revived the book of Pashto grammar which was republished in 1908 (Khattak,1998).

In 1921 the colonial masters designed primary schools curriculum to impart Western knowledge through mother tongue of the students. The main objective was to prepare students for middle and high schools and to the lower rank of public jobs where knowledge of English language was not pre-requisite.

The state of Swat was recognized by colonial masters in 1926 and Miangul Abdul Wadood, the grandson of the Akhund of Swat that ruled Swat, was then accepted as the Wali (ruler). The new Wali announced Pashto to be the official language of the state and Urdu script was adopted for writing. Swat was annexed to Pakistan in 1969 and the use of Pashto language as a domain of power came to an end,

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however in government schools Pashto continued to be used as a subject and medium of instruction.

Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayum Khan was serving as the Minister of Transferred Departments in Legislative Council of the first Governor of NWFP, stated on October, 1932 about the medium of instruction, keeping in view the survey of Primary Education Committee (1929-30), that the majority of Pashto speaking people favored Urdu rather than Pashto medium of instruction. Pashto was only recommended to be used in lower classes. However, in 1935 he was of the view that education up to class two should be imparted in the home language of children i.e. in Pashto and Hindko, where their majority lives.

After 1937 election Sahibzada A.Q. Khan again formed the ministry with the conditional support (withdrawn of Pashto circular) of non-Muslims.

Sir Sahibzada Ministry served till September 1937 then was changed by Dr. Khan Sahib (Congress Ministry) and with the help of Hazara Democratic Party and National Party (of Hindu-Sikh coalition) passed a no-confidence motion against the withdrawing of the Pashto circular and re-opened the Pashto language issue. Mian Jaffar Khan the Minister of Education, stated in the Assembly session of 28th September 1937 that Pashto was taught as a subject in Pashto speaking areas of the province. Therefore it should be made the medium of instruction by the government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa primary schools. This time opposition role performed by Hindko speaking Sarwar Khan of Haripur with the assistance of non-Muslim members. Sarwar Khan stated that imposition of compulsory Pashto language would like to federate Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (NWFP) with Afghanistan rather than India.

Dr. Khan Sahib's Ministry in 1939 ignored opposition and introduced Pashto as a compulsory medium of instruction in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa primary schools. However it was further clarified by Qazi AttauUllah, the Minister of Education that it would only be confined upto Pashto speaking areas (Rahman,1995).

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan established Azad Madrassas under the auspices of "Tahreek-e-Islahi Mouashera". Azad Islamia Schools were established in Charsadda, Uthmanzai and Sawabi. In all these schools the medium of instruction was Pashto. In august and september 1929, Ghaffar Khan also demanded that Pashto should be declared as

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the medium of instruction in primary schools (Shah, 2012 & Rahman,1995).

#### **After Establishment of Pakistan, 1947**

In 1979 Government of Pakistan's Education Policy recommended that all provincial governments were allowed to implement national or provincial languages as the medium of instruction at primary school level. Prior to that UNESCO was invited by the central government to find out different reasons of poor quality of education, the country was confronting with. Therefore UNESCO collected data from all over Pakistan with full dedication. It was found that since 1947 the education at primary school level had never been provided in child's home language.

Consequently, after continuous untiring efforts in 1984 the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government announced Pashto as a medium of instruction in Pashto speaking area at primary school level. For this purpose the Provincial Government started two projects i.e. "Primary Text book Pashto Translation Project" and "Pashto Dictionary Project" simultaneously in the province (Daud, 2006a).

#### **Project for the Translation of Primary School Text books**

It was based on the following objectives:

- i. To prepare translated text books in Pashto language for primary school students.
- ii. To provide teachers training in approved Pashto script.
- iii. To conduct seminars for the promotion of Pashto language.
- iv. To monitor and report to the secretary education (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) about the implementation process of Pashto language as instructional medium in primary schools of Pashto speaking areas.

The director of this project was Taqwim-ul- Haq Kaka Khel, prepared a guide book for primary school teachers training in Pashto (Daud, 2006a).

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**Pashto Dictionary Project**

The director of this project was Qalandar Momand. In 1993, he succeeded in compiling a dictionary with the name of “Daryab” (Daud, 2006b).

**Pak-German Project**

This project started in 1984 and the purpose of this project was to publish text books in Pashto language for 24 government primary schools of Peshawar district (Khattak, 1998). This project provided training to the concerned primary school teachers (Daud, 2005). The project also suggested story telling method for primary school students (Khattak, 1998).

**Evaluation Report (1989) of Primary Schools Text Book Pashto Translation Project**

The main findings of the Evaluation Report were as under;

- Pashto was neither introduced as a subject nor as a medium of instruction in all government primary schools simultaneously.
- Pashto medium schools were found better as compare to Urdu medium on the basis of achievement tests.
- In the response to a questionnaire: Parents, teachers and administrators were not happy of Pashto medium, because Pashto was not language of domains of power. Most of jobs were achievable through the knowledge of English or Urdu. So Pashto education appeared not fruit full. Particularly parents and teachers were not convinced on the privileged position of Pashto in school curriculum.
- There are several scripts of Pashto in use i.e. the Nastaleeq in which the first authentic manuscript (Khairul Bayan of Bayazid Ansari) is written and the famous manuscript of Akhund Darwiza, “Makhzanul Islam” was written in Naskh.

The famous Pashto writer Maulana Abdul Qadir suggested that Naskh be replaced by Nastaleeq, so that Pashto could be written like Urdu.

- The dropout rate was found same on both mediums i.e. Pashto and Urdu.
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- The staff of Primary Text books Pashto Translation Project may be added with two additional posts of subject specialists (one male and one female).
- The elementary teachers training institutions should take adequate measure to train teachers in Pashto.
- A comprehensive in-service training may be provided to teachers so they may not face any difficulty in using Pashto medium for instruction.
- For strengthening Pashto medium frequent seminars and workshops may be arranged.(Rahman,1996)

Taqwim-ul-Haq Kaka Khel famous Pashto writer visited many schools and provided training to teachers regarding new script of Pashto.

Dr. Rahim Marwat also added that the issue of unified accent and script of various dialects of Pashto in the Province would be resolved soon. He referred an incident, when Pashto was declared as a medium of instruction in 1984; the Bannu people burnt down primary school text books, because these published books were written in hard Yousufzai Pashto.

This issue was also recorded by the Evaluation Report of the Primary Text books Translation Project, but instead of these hurdles Pashto was introduced as a medium of instruction in Pashto speaking areas.

Master Khan Gul, Ex MPA started a movement for the implementation of Pashto language as an instructional medium.

There were many prominent personalities i.e. Qalandar Momand, Taqwimul Haq Kaka Khel, Ayub Sabir, Salim Raz, Dawar Khan Daud, Pareshan Khattak and Maulana Abdul Qadir did struggle in own way for the promotion of Pashto language and implementation as an instructional medium (Khattak,1998).

#### **Instructional Material Development Cell (IMDC)**

A project in 1991 with the patronage of World Bank did extensive work for the preparation of teaching material in Pashto and provided training to the primary school teachers (Daud, 2005).

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**A Survey Report on Base Line Data for Curriculum Reforms in District Malakand**

A study was conducted by Farooq *et al.* (1991) on behalf of Directorate of Curriculum and Teachers Education, Abbottabad. The main findings of the study were as under:

- 97.5 % male and 94.9% female teachers while all students (boys and girls) had Pashto as their mother tongue.
- 78.4% of schools were found Pashto medium, 41.2% Urdu and 5.7% English medium.
- 61.75% male teachers proposed Urdu, 36.5% Pashto and only 2% proposed English medium of instruction. While among female teachers 87.1% proposed Urdu and only 12.8% proposed Pashto medium.

**Primary Education Programme-Improvement of the Learning Environment (PEPILE)**

In 1996, the two projects i.e. Pashto Translation Project and Pak-German Project as a joint venture with the Text Book Board Peshawar work together to develop text books for primary schools of Pashto speaking children. Guide book for teachers was also prepared (Daud, 2005).

**Feasibility Study of Introducing Pashto Language as Medium of Instruction at Government Primary School Level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa**

The findings of Siddiqui (2014) in the feasibility study were as under:

- Majority of teachers and small number of parents (of primary school students) had ability to read and write Pashto.
  - Majority of teachers, students and parents home language was Pashto.
  - The progress in learning to read and write in Pashto was not satisfactory of those students who had mother tongue other than Pashto.
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- An overwhelming majority of the parents of primary school students opposed Pashto medium keeping in mind the future (higher education and competitive examinations) of their children.
  - Most of these teachers had no proper qualification in Pashto. It was also found out from parents and teachers responses that students acquire literacy skills in a language other than their mother tongue face double burden.
  - In these primary schools majority of teachers responded that students may face problems in class adjustment, if they switch over to Urdu or English from Pashto medium.
  - There was no deficiency of curriculum designer, translators and authors in the province for Pashto medium of instruction.
  - The main hurdles which were found in the implementation of Pashto medium of instruction were the disfavor of non-Pashto speakers, the will of parents and teachers particularly provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Because they were thinking that without knowing Urdu (National) and English (International) languages they will be relegated in the provincial boundaries and cannot aspire to positions of power in the country.
  - Researcher concluded that Pashto medium of instruction was helpful but was not considered feasible because most of respondents disfavored it.
  - He augmented that Pashto language should not be totally banned but it should be allowed to use as a subject and helping language in teaching learning process if needed.
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**Conclusion**

In the past efforts for Pashto medium of instruction were taken by various governments but every time opposed by politicians (from opposition) particularly non-Pashto speakers and made it political issue.

**Recommendations**

The opposition opposed Pashto medium of instruction but never made serious efforts and demands for implementation of any language (other than Pashto) as medium of instruction. The government should implement Pashto and other major languages of the province as medium of instruction where their majority live. The government should also encourage by awards and cash prizes the writers of various languages.

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