

Importance of Mother Tongue in Teaching Social Science in Elementary Education

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Abstract

Mother tongue-based instruction is increasingly recognized as a vital component of effective early education. In the context of teaching social science at the elementary level, it significantly enhances students' comprehension and engagement by connecting new concepts to their lived experiences. Beyond improving understanding, instruction in the mother tongue fosters critical thinking, strengthens cultural identity, promotes social inclusion, and nurtures democratic values essential for active citizenship. This paper examines the importance of mother tongue instruction in elementary social science education, highlighting its cognitive, cultural, social, psychological, and pedagogical benefits. It also discusses the challenges hindering its implementation and proposes practical strategies to effectively integrate mother tongue-based teaching into educational systems, particularly in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Keywords: Mother tongue instruction, Social science education, Elementary education, Cultural identity, Inclusive learning

1. Introduction

Social science is a vital subject that equips children with an understanding of their community, culture, history, environment, and the values necessary to live harmoniously in society. Elementary education is a critical period during which children form foundational concepts and develop lifelong learning habits. At this formative stage, using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction serves as a natural bridge between home and school, making learning more meaningful, accessible, and effective (UNESCO, 2003).

The mother tongue, as the first language a child acquires at home, plays a fundamental role in shaping identity, supporting cognitive development, and fostering emotional well-being. Research consistently shows that children learn best when they are taught in a language they fully understand. Learning in the mother tongue enables them to actively participate in classroom activities, ask questions, and express their thoughts and opinions confidently. In social science education, this linguistic comfort allows children to better comprehend complex concepts related to social structures, governance,

civic responsibilities, rights, and cultural diversity.

Moreover, teaching social science in the mother tongue promotes inclusivity and helps bridge educational inequalities. This approach is particularly beneficial for children from marginalized, rural, or indigenous backgrounds who may struggle when taught exclusively in a second or foreign language. By connecting classroom learning with students' daily experiences and cultural contexts, mother tongue instruction enables children to relate theoretical knowledge to real-life situations within their communities, enhancing both understanding and relevance.

Additionally, mother tongue-based teaching fosters critical thinking and analytical skills in a language that feels natural and empowering. It nurtures a strong sense of belonging and pride in one's cultural heritage, contributing to the preservation of linguistic diversity and cultural identity. This approach also supports the development of socially responsible, culturally aware, and active citizens who are prepared to participate meaningfully in their communities.

In this context, the importance of using the mother tongue in teaching social science at the elementary level cannot be overstated. It empowers children to learn with confidence, promotes equitable and inclusive education, and lays a strong foundation for lifelong learning, critical engagement, and active citizenship.

2. Cognitive Benefits of Mother Tongue Instruction

2.1 Enhanced Conceptual Understanding

Children learn best when taught in a language they deeply understand. Teaching social science in the mother tongue allows them to relate new concepts to their lived experiences, leading to more effective comprehension of topics such as local governance, cultural practices, and environmental issues (Cummins, 2001).

For example, when children learn about "community helpers" or "local governance" in their mother tongue, they can directly connect these ideas to familiar figures in their villages or towns, making learning concrete rather than abstract. They can easily recognize the roles of the village head, local farmers, health workers, or artisans within their immediate context, rather than memorizing unfamiliar terms and examples without meaningful connections.

Furthermore, learning in the mother tongue empowers children to ask questions, engage in discussions, and articulate their perspectives freely, thus deepening their engagement with social science topics. This language comfort encourages active participation and collaborative learning, as children feel confident sharing stories and examples from their own lives.

When discussing topics such as festivals, social customs, or environmental conservation, students are more likely to share personal experiences and community practices. This not only enriches classroom discussions but also validates their cultural identity, fostering a sense of respect and belonging.

Additionally, instruction in the mother tongue supports the development of higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, comparison, and critical evaluation. Rather than relying on rote memorization, children are encouraged to critically examine social issues, question existing practices, and suggest solutions relevant to their own communities. This critical engagement is essential for nurturing responsible and informed future citizens.

2.2 Improved Critical Thinking

Mother tongue-based learning encourages children to

think independently, analyze deeply, and confidently express their views. Students can engage with questions such as "Why do we follow certain traditions?" or "How do community leaders make decisions?" with greater clarity and depth when they are able to process and articulate their thoughts in their first language (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

When children learn in a familiar language, they become active participants rather than passive recipients of information. This active engagement fosters independent thinking, as children feel safe to question, challenge ideas, and propose alternative viewpoints without the fear of making linguistic errors.

For instance, when discussing social issues like gender roles, caste dynamics, or environmental challenges, students can draw on observations from their surroundings, reflect critically on these realities, and suggest possible solutions. This process nurtures social responsibility and deepens their understanding of societal structures.

Moreover, cognitive resources that would otherwise be used to translate new concepts from an unfamiliar language can instead be directed towards deeper analysis, synthesis, and problem-solving. This results in more meaningful learning outcomes, as students are able to connect classroom knowledge to real-world contexts.

Mother tongue instruction also creates a supportive environment for peer discussions and debates, helping students develop critical thinking, effective communication, empathy, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Research indicates that children educated initially in their mother tongue develop stronger logical reasoning abilities and perform better in tasks that require analysis and evaluation (Ball, 2011). They are better equipped to understand cause-and-effect relationships, compare different perspectives, and make informed decisions—skills essential for active participation in society.

2.3 Stronger Academic Foundation

A solid foundation in the mother tongue supports the effective acquisition of additional languages and other academic subjects later on. According to Cummins' (2001) linguistic interdependence hypothesis, cognitive and literacy skills developed in the first language transfer positively to second language learning. This means that once children thoroughly understand core social science concepts in their mother tongue, they can more easily

learn the same content in English or other languages later.

By building strong literacy and cognitive skills in their mother tongue, children develop essential academic abilities such as reading comprehension, critical thinking, and effective communication. These core skills act as a scaffold, supporting further learning and allowing students to focus on mastering new vocabulary and language structures rather than struggling to understand fundamental concepts.

For example, a child who learns about democracy, local governance, and environmental stewardship in their mother tongue will later only need to acquire the corresponding terminology in another language, making the transition smoother and less overwhelming.

Moreover, studies have shown that children initially taught in their mother tongue exhibit better long-term academic outcomes across all subjects, not just language or social science. They achieve higher academic performance, show greater retention of knowledge, and develop stronger problem-solving abilities (UNESCO, 2003; Heugh, 2012).

Establishing a strong academic foundation in the early years also promotes self-confidence and fosters a positive attitude toward schooling. When students experience early success in their mother tongue, they are more likely to develop a lifelong love of learning and remain motivated throughout their educational journey.

Furthermore, early success in the mother tongue reduces dropout rates and minimizes educational disparities among children from diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds, ensuring equitable opportunities for all learners.

3. Cultural and Social Benefits

3.1 *Preservation of Cultural Identity*

Teaching social science in the mother tongue plays a vital role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. By integrating local festivals, traditional songs, folk stories, and indigenous customs into lessons, children develop pride in their own communities and a stronger sense of identity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

For instance, in India, a lesson on community life delivered in Manipuri or Assamese might incorporate local festival traditions or indigenous conflict resolution practices, helping children feel deeply rooted in their culture. When children see their language, customs, and community practices represented in the curriculum, they

experience validation and recognition of their cultural background. This validation strengthens their sense of belonging and self-worth, which is particularly critical during the formative years of elementary education. Furthermore, it helps counteract the marginalization often faced by minority language communities when education is conducted exclusively in dominant or foreign languages.

The use of the mother tongue also facilitates the inclusion of oral traditions, proverbs, local idioms, and indigenous knowledge systems that are often excluded from mainstream curricula. By weaving these cultural elements into social science instruction, children not only develop a deeper understanding of their social environment but also gain an appreciation for the richness of their cultural heritage.

Preserving cultural identity through education encourages intergenerational learning. When children learn about local customs and stories in school, they often engage in discussions at home with parents and elders, fostering a reciprocal exchange of knowledge that strengthens family and community ties.

At a societal level, nurturing cultural identity in young learners promotes respect for diversity and intercultural understanding. Children with a strong foundation in their own culture are better prepared to appreciate and respect other cultures, an essential skill in increasingly pluralistic societies.

Moreover, language and culture are intrinsically linked; the loss of one often leads to the erosion of the other. By using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, schools play a crucial role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and ensuring its transmission to future generations.

3.2 *Promoting Social Inclusion and Equity*

Mother tongue instruction serves as a powerful tool for promoting equity among learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It ensures that children from marginalized, indigenous, and rural communities are not excluded from education because of language barriers (Mohanty, 2009). This is especially important in multilingual countries where many children enter school without prior exposure to dominant or official languages.

When children begin their educational journey in a language they understand, they feel more included and are more likely to participate actively in classroom activities. This reduces feelings of alienation and anxiety, which

often arise when students are forced to learn in an unfamiliar language. Instead of struggling to decode lessons, children can focus on understanding content, developing skills, and building self-confidence.

Mother tongue-based education also addresses historical and social inequalities by recognizing and valuing all languages equally, not just the dominant or high-status ones. In many societies, certain languages carry greater prestige, leading children who speak minority languages to feel inferior or marginalized. Providing education in their mother tongue affirms their linguistic and cultural rights, fostering a sense of dignity and respect.

Furthermore, research shows that children taught in their first language are more likely to stay in school longer and achieve better academic outcomes (UNESCO, 2003). This contributes to narrowing educational achievement gaps and creating more equitable societies.

By reducing dropout rates and improving learning outcomes, mother tongue instruction helps break cycles of poverty and social exclusion. It empowers children from marginalized communities to become active, informed citizens who can participate in societal decision-making and advocate for their rights.

In multilingual and multicultural societies, promoting inclusion through mother tongue education also strengthens social cohesion. When children see their languages and cultures respected and reflected in the classroom, it fosters mutual understanding and reduces social tensions between different groups.

3.3 Strengthening Community Ties

Learning in the mother tongue strengthens connections between children, their families, and their wider community. When children can confidently express themselves in their first language, they are more likely to share and discuss lessons at home with parents, grandparents, and other relatives, turning learning into a shared family experience (Ball, 2011).

This transformation of learning from an individual classroom activity into a communal, home-based dialogue supports intergenerational knowledge transfer and helps preserve oral traditions, folklore, and indigenous practices. When children bring home stories about local heroes, traditional practices, or community governance discussed in social science classes, elders are often inspired to share their own stories and wisdom.

This two-way exchange of knowledge reinforces community bonds and builds a collective sense of ownership over children's education. Parents and elders feel recognized and valued as contributors rather than passive observers, leading to increased support for schooling, higher attendance rates, and a more positive community attitude toward education.

Moreover, using the mother tongue creates opportunities for schools to collaborate with local communities in developing culturally relevant curricula. Inviting community leaders and cultural experts into the classroom enriches lessons and provides authentic learning experiences that resonate deeply with students.

Strengthening community ties through mother tongue education not only enhances educational outcomes but also instills respect for local traditions and values. It nurtures socially aware and responsible citizens who understand, appreciate, and actively contribute to their communities.

At a broader level, this interconnectedness fosters social cohesion and community resilience. Communities that are actively engaged in education are better equipped to collectively address challenges, preserve cultural practices, and support each other in times of need.

4. Psychological Benefits

4.1 Increased Motivation and Confidence

Children feel more secure, confident, and less anxious when learning in a language that is familiar to them. Using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction allows students to actively participate in discussions, ask questions without fear, and express their thoughts and opinions freely (UNESCO, 2003). This active engagement is particularly vital in social science education, where dialogue, debate, and reflective thinking are central components.

When children fully understand the language of instruction, they are not burdened by the fear of making mistakes or being ridiculed for incorrect pronunciation or grammar. This freedom from linguistic anxiety fosters a positive emotional connection to learning. Conversely, learning in an unfamiliar language can create feelings of frustration, inferiority, and helplessness, often leading students to withdraw from classroom activities or lose interest in school altogether.

Learning in the mother tongue enables children to confidently share their ideas and experiences, making

them more engaged and enthusiastic about their education. This heightened engagement naturally increases their motivation to attend school, participate actively, and explore new ideas. Such motivation is crucial in social science, where students are encouraged to understand complex social issues, appreciate diverse perspectives, and develop their own viewpoints.

Increased motivation directly contributes to improved academic performance. Confident learners are more likely to take on challenging tasks, think critically, collaborate with peers, and develop problem-solving skills. They also tend to cultivate a lifelong love for learning and exploration, which supports their overall personal and academic growth.

Additionally, the sense of achievement that children experience when they understand and articulate complex ideas in their own language significantly strengthens their self-esteem. This self-confidence extends beyond academic settings, positively influencing their social interactions and personal development.

In the context of social science education, fostering such confidence helps children learn to express their views on social issues, engage in meaningful discussions, and respect others' opinions — foundational elements of democratic citizenship and social responsibility.

Moreover, when children see their language valued and used as a medium of formal instruction, it affirms their identity and cultural heritage. This validation further motivates them to actively participate in school and strengthens their emotional connection to learning.

4.2 Reduced Dropout and Repetition Rates

Mother tongue instruction is strongly linked to lower dropout and repetition rates, as it makes learning more accessible, meaningful, and enjoyable for students (Thomas & Collier, 1997). This is particularly critical for achieving universal elementary education goals, especially in rural and tribal areas where children often speak local languages at home. When children begin their education in an unfamiliar language, they face significant barriers to understanding lessons and engaging with classroom activities. These challenges often lead to feelings of frustration, failure, and alienation, prompting many students — particularly those from marginalized or minority language communities — to disengage or drop out of school entirely.

Conversely, when lessons are taught in a language that children understand well, they are able to follow the

curriculum more easily, perform better academically, and develop a positive attitude toward schooling. This strong foundation reduces the likelihood of grade repetition and school dropout, enabling children to progress smoothly through their educational journey.

Research consistently shows that initial instruction in the mother tongue results in higher rates of grade promotion and lower rates of grade repetition. Students are more likely to meet developmental and academic milestones on time, avoiding the psychological and social stigma associated with falling behind peers.

In rural and tribal areas, where local languages often differ significantly from the national or official languages of instruction, mother tongue-based education plays a particularly vital role. It bridges the gap between home and school environments, making education feel more relevant and aligned with children's everyday experiences. As a result, parents are more supportive of their children's schooling, leading to higher enrollment, retention, and completion rates.

Furthermore, lower dropout and repetition rates have significant long-term social and economic benefits. Children who stay in school and complete their education are better equipped to pursue higher education, secure employment, and contribute to community development, ultimately helping to break cycles of poverty and social exclusion.

At the systemic level, reducing dropout rates improves the efficiency of the education system, as fewer resources are needed to support students who might otherwise repeat grades. It also aligns with global educational commitments such as UNESCO's Education for All and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize inclusive and equitable quality education for all learners.

5. Pedagogical Benefits in Teaching Social Science

5.1 Contextualized Learning

Social science education requires students to understand societal structures, community dynamics, and environmental interactions, all of which are best explored through familiar contexts. Teaching in the mother tongue enables educators to draw upon local examples and culturally relevant materials, thus greatly enhancing contextual understanding (Mohanty, 2009).

When social science is taught in a language that students understand deeply, teachers can connect lessons to local

realities and lived experiences. For example, discussions on governance can involve village councils or local self-help groups; environmental studies can explore nearby rivers, forests, or community farming methods; and history lessons can highlight local freedom fighters, traditional leaders, or indigenous knowledge systems.

This approach transforms abstract social science concepts into concrete, relatable content. Rather than memorizing disconnected facts, students learn to see social structures and environmental issues reflected in their own lives. They can analyze community challenges and contributions in a more authentic and immediate way.

Incorporating local case studies, folk narratives, proverbs, and stories enriches classroom discussions and makes learning more engaging and participatory. Students are encouraged to bring in their own observations and family experiences, creating a dynamic, co-constructed learning environment. This process not only deepens understanding but also builds a sense of ownership, pride, and connection to their community.

Teaching in the mother tongue also enables teachers to adapt their strategies to cultural nuances. Sensitive social topics—such as caste, gender roles, or local conflicts—can be addressed respectfully and meaningfully. Students learn to critically examine local issues and consider possible solutions, nurturing informed and empathetic future citizens.

Moreover, using culturally relevant materials strengthens the connection between formal education and community life. This promotes mutual respect between schools and communities, as local traditions and knowledge systems are validated and integrated into the curriculum.

In multilingual and multicultural societies, contextualized learning through the mother tongue preserves linguistic and cultural diversity while fostering social cohesion and mutual understanding among different groups.

5.2 *Better Assessment and Feedback*

Mother tongue instruction allows for more authentic and effective assessment of students' learning. When students express themselves in their own language, teachers gain deeper insights into their conceptual understanding, reasoning, and analytical abilities, rather than merely assessing their proficiency in a second or foreign language (Ball, 2011).

Using the mother tongue removes linguistic barriers, allowing students to clearly articulate their thoughts,

opinions, and analyses. For example, when explaining the function of a local governance system, a child can use familiar terms and real-life references to demonstrate comprehension, even if they lack formal academic vocabulary.

This approach supports open-ended, reflective responses rather than rote memorization. Teachers can assess critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to connect classroom concepts with real-world situations. Such assessments provide a more accurate picture of a child's learning progress and cognitive development.

Moreover, the comfort of expressing themselves in their first language encourages students to ask questions, express doubts, and engage in meaningful discussions about their learning. Teachers can identify and correct misconceptions immediately, fostering a more supportive and responsive learning environment.

Feedback delivered in the mother tongue is more accessible and meaningful for students. When feedback is understood fully, it becomes actionable and encourages improvement. This personalized guidance strengthens the teacher-student relationship and motivates learners to actively participate and grow.

Additionally, assessing in the mother tongue promotes inclusivity and equity by eliminating language-related biases. Students from marginalized linguistic backgrounds have an equal opportunity to showcase their true abilities and engage in critical social discussions, which are at the core of social science education.

By enabling more authentic assessments and tailored feedback, mother tongue instruction enhances learning outcomes, nurtures higher-order thinking skills, and fosters independent, socially conscious learners.

5.3 *Incorporation of Local Knowledge Systems*

Mother tongue instruction creates a vital space for integrating indigenous knowledge systems and local history into the curriculum. Students can learn about community governance, environmental stewardship, traditional health practices, and local heroes—elements often marginalized in mainstream, standardized curricula (NEP, 2020).

Teaching social science in the mother tongue allows for authentic inclusion of culturally significant content. Indigenous practices such as traditional farming, conflict resolution methods, folk medicine, and local conservation efforts can be discussed in detail and appreciated fully.

These forms of knowledge often have no direct equivalent in dominant or foreign languages and are best understood in their original linguistic and cultural context.

For instance, in tribal regions of India, students might study the Meitei Marup in Manipur or the Dhumkuria youth dormitory system among certain Adivasi communities, learning about their roles in social cohesion and community governance. Similarly, lessons on environmental conservation can highlight local water management, sacred groves, and seed preservation practices that exemplify sustainable living.

Including local historical figures and community leaders empowers students by offering them relatable role models from their own cultural backgrounds. Rather than focusing solely on national or global heroes, students develop a deeper respect for and connection to their immediate communities, fostering cultural pride and self-worth.

Mother tongue-based education also facilitates community participation in the learning process. Elders and local experts can be invited to share stories, traditional wisdom, and practices, creating a living classroom that values intergenerational learning. This approach not only enriches educational content but also strengthens respect for elders and traditional knowledge systems.

Furthermore, integrating local knowledge systems fosters critical thinking and comparative analysis. Students can discuss the relevance and adaptability of traditional practices in modern contexts, helping them develop solutions to contemporary social and environmental challenges grounded in local wisdom.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the importance of incorporating local contexts and indigenous knowledge to make education more inclusive and meaningful. Mother tongue instruction directly supports this vision by enabling these knowledge systems to be formally recognized and appreciated within the curriculum.

5.4 Challenges in Implementing Mother Tongue-Based Teaching

Despite its numerous advantages, implementing mother tongue-based instruction in social science—especially at the elementary level—presents several significant challenges that must be addressed to fully realize its potential.

5.5 Limited Teaching and Learning Materials

A major obstacle is the lack of high-quality teaching and learning materials in local languages (Mohanty, 2009). Most existing educational resources—including textbooks, workbooks, charts, and audiovisual aids—are designed in dominant regional or national languages, leaving minority languages and dialects underrepresented. Even when materials are available, they often suffer from being outdated, poorly designed, or not aligned with modern pedagogical standards. This scarcity of culturally and linguistically relevant materials makes it difficult for teachers to deliver effective lessons and for students to engage meaningfully with social science content in their own language.

5.6 Shortage of Qualified Teachers

Another critical barrier is the shortage of teachers who are adequately trained in mother tongue- based pedagogy (UNESCO, 2003). Many teachers may lack proficiency in the local languages spoken by their students or may not possess the necessary skills to adapt social science content into culturally responsive and linguistically accessible lessons. Moreover, both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs often overlook the importance of mother tongue instruction, leading to a teaching workforce that feels ill-prepared and unsupported. This gap in teacher preparation results in inconsistent or ineffective classroom practices, even in contexts where policies formally endorse mother tongue education.

5.7 Parental Aspirations and Societal Attitudes

Parental and societal perceptions present another major challenge. Many parents believe that early instruction in dominant languages such as English offers greater economic and social mobility opportunities for their children (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). Influenced by globalization and the high social prestige attached to certain languages, parents may resist mother tongue-based education, perceiving it as a barrier rather than an asset. In some cases, this leads parents to move their children to private or urban schools that promise early English-medium instruction, even when it may not be developmentally appropriate for the child. This lack of parental and community support can significantly undermine efforts to implement mother tongue-based teaching effectively.

5.8 Policy and Administrative Constraints

Although many national and international policies—such

as India's National Education Policy (NEP), 2020—advocate for mother tongue instruction, practical implementation often falls short due to systemic and administrative constraints. Inconsistent policy enforcement, insufficient funding, weak monitoring systems, and a lack of political will hinder effective rollout at the ground level. Additionally, centralized approaches to curriculum development and textbook production frequently neglect local adaptations and contextual needs. These administrative barriers discourage schools and teachers from fully embracing mother tongue-based teaching methods, despite evidence supporting their educational benefits.

5.9 Other Contextual Barriers

Linguistic diversity within classrooms presents further challenges. In multilingual regions, it is often difficult to select a single "mother tongue" that is inclusive and accessible to all students. The presence of multiple dialects and languages in a single classroom complicates the logistics of implementing mother tongue instruction equitably. Furthermore, increasing urbanization and migration have led to more linguistically heterogeneous classrooms, making the practical adoption of one language as the medium of instruction even more complex.

6. Strategies for Effective Implementation

To fully harness the benefits of mother tongue-based instruction in social science at the elementary level, a comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and context-specific approach is essential. The following strategies offer practical pathways for effective implementation:

6.1 Development of Contextualized Materials

Creating high-quality teaching and learning materials in the mother tongue is foundational to effective implementation (Ball, 2011). These materials should go beyond simple translations of existing content; they must integrate local history, customs, social structures, folk narratives, and indigenous knowledge systems to make learning more meaningful and engaging. For example, social science textbooks can include case studies on local governance, community conflict resolution practices, regional environmental conservation strategies, and biographies of local heroes. Involving local educators, cultural experts, and community members in the development process ensures that materials are authentic, contextually relevant, and culturally sensitive, thereby fostering a strong connection between the curriculum and

students' lived experiences.

6.2 Teacher Capacity Building

Teachers are central to the success of mother tongue-based education. Comprehensive and continuous professional development is crucial to equip teachers with skills and confidence in mother tongue-based pedagogy (NEP, 2020). Training programs should emphasize strategies for integrating local knowledge into lessons, fostering critical thinking, designing participatory and contextually relevant learning activities, and conducting effective assessments in the mother tongue. Additionally, establishing mentorship programs and professional learning communities can facilitate peer support, encourage the sharing of best practices, and help teachers navigate challenges collaboratively. Investing in teacher capacity not only improves instructional quality but also empowers teachers to become advocates for culturally responsive education.

6.3 Parental and Community Engagement

Active engagement with parents and the broader community is vital for fostering support and ensuring long-term sustainability (Mohanty, 2009). Awareness campaigns, community workshops, and dialogue sessions can help dispel misconceptions that only dominant or global languages, such as English, guarantee academic and professional success. Highlighting the cognitive, cultural, and psychological benefits of mother tongue education can help build greater acceptance and enthusiasm among parents. Moreover, involving community elders and local leaders in curriculum design, classroom activities, and cultural events enhances the integration of indigenous knowledge and strengthens community-school relationships. When parents and community members see their language and culture valued in formal education, they are more likely to actively support and participate in the educational process.

6.4 Flexible Language Policies

Adopting flexible and adaptive language policies is essential for supporting a gradual and balanced transition from the mother tongue to additional languages, such as regional or international languages (Cummins, 2001). Rather than enforcing abrupt shifts, a phased bilingual or multilingual approach allows children to establish strong cognitive and conceptual foundations in their mother tongue before introducing additional languages. This strategy supports both immediate comprehension and

long-term language development, preparing students for future academic and professional opportunities without undermining their initial learning experiences. Flexibility is particularly crucial in linguistically diverse classrooms, where children may speak different dialects or languages at home.

6.5 Monitoring and Research

Establishing robust monitoring systems and continuous research frameworks is critical for assessing the effectiveness and impact of mother tongue-based programs (UNESCO, 2003). Regular evaluations of student learning outcomes, teaching practices, and community feedback help identify strengths, uncover challenges, and inform targeted interventions. Data-driven decision-making allows policymakers and educators to refine instructional strategies, improve resource allocation, and enhance program design. Furthermore, longitudinal studies can provide evidence on the long-term academic, social, and cultural impacts of mother tongue instruction, offering valuable insights for scaling and policy advocacy.

7. Conclusion

Mother tongue-based instruction in elementary social science education is not merely an instructional strategy but a transformative approach that nurtures culturally grounded, critically aware, and socially responsible young citizens. By facilitating deeper conceptual understanding, fostering critical thinking, and strengthening emotional and cultural identity, mother tongue education supports holistic cognitive, psychological, and social development.

Furthermore, it promotes educational equity and inclusiveness, empowering children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to fully participate in and benefit from schooling. While significant challenges — such as limited resources, insufficient teacher training, and societal biases — continue to impede its widespread implementation, these obstacles can be overcome through collaborative efforts among policymakers, educators, parents, and communities.

As underscored by India's National Education Policy (2020) and global frameworks such as UNESCO's recommendations, recognizing and valuing the mother tongue in education is not just a pedagogical imperative but also a fundamental human right and an essential pathway toward social justice and democratic participation.

Ultimately, integrating mother tongue-based instruction in

social science at the elementary level lays a strong foundation for lifelong learning and active citizenship, fostering a generation of learners who are both proud of their cultural heritage and equipped to engage critically and constructively with the world around them.

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