

How Language Can Reduce Poverty?

Mr. Kashif Ali Sabiri (Pakistan School Muscat, Oman)

SUMMARY

Language is the basis for growth and important in any discussion. There is a saying, “Speak so that I may see” so that we may visualize.

Language is the medium of human communication and growth, intellectually and socially and forms the basis of any discussion involving the relation between development and education. In order to respond to societal changes and bridge the gap between the less privileged and the more privileged, language policies play an important role.

What is poverty and who are its victims? Language is important in any discussion of poverty reduction because it determines who has access to educational, political and economic resources. Language takes account of the society and so allows learners to participate freely in all affairs of life, make use of their indigenous knowledge, and enhance their self-esteem and identity.

Poverty affects many people across the world. Many people have died because of the lack of food, clothing and money. Poverty has raised the rate of crime.

Some people are more prone to being poor, for example single mothers, single older people, people with disabilities, and aborigines.

The European Commission (EC) recognized the importance of language skills in addressing challenges as diverse as globalisation and increased mobility and immigration.

The EC said multilingualism is an asset for Europe and a shared commitment, especially given the challenges of immigration, and the need for cohesion and prosperity. The year 2008 was designated European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, highlighting the role of languages in removing barriers to interaction between cultures.

Language is necessary for employability. In France, the education minister recently offered free English lessons to students during school holidays, describing failure to speak the language fluently as a handicap in today's world.

Language learning is a lifelong process and there is a need for more adult education. The EC says more effort should be made to offer a wider variety of languages, and calls for more teacher exchanges to take place to enhance their own fluency. It also highlights the potential to better exploit EU languages abroad and non-EU languages within the bloc itself.

UNESCO, in a report on the use of vernacular languages, states that a mother tongue is a person's natural means of self-expression, and that a critical need is to develop one's power of self-expression to the full.

The report argues that adult illiterates should make their first steps into literacy in their mother tongue, moving on to a second language if and when they desire and are able to do so.

To eradicate poverty, programs must target those underprivileged communities that have difficulty accessing educational and economic resources. This can be achieved by offering some programs in

minority languages, as well as by having an adequate and varied supply of reading material in the same.

The role of language in the adult education system reduces poverty because it removes language barriers and enables more people to benefit from available education and information networks. Language is an embodiment of a community's knowledge, wisdom and experience and its exclusion results in their loss.

With the acceptance of English as the dominant international language, scholars fear that our collective cultures will be edited and summarized according to criteria of relevance by the wealthy, dominant cultures.

I would like to make a personal request. Let's join hands in eradicating poverty using the sharp-edged axe of language and learning.

DISCUSSION

Q – Our basic goal is to reduce poverty. How can we really achieve the MDGs by 2015? The most basic thing is education. Remove education and there is no progress. If language is central to all our activities we need to find out how many languages there are. There are 110 languages in the Philippines. What language will we use to be understood in one place?

Kashif Ali Sabiri A – We need to look at the material to use on the problem. Language can overcome issues in the world. Money, books, everything depends on language. So people need to use one language (mother tongue) and the national language.

Right from primary school, there should be one language in one country. In my country it is English. It is easier to learn in English. There should be no limit on adopting a language.

It is more feasible to spend money on one language rather than money on local languages.

We are becoming a global village. We are citizens of one planet but we promote 6,900 languages. There needs to be a language change. I just share this idea.

We need to follow developed countries, but not necessarily copy them.