

5. Annual Indian Education Report 2025-Reports

UNESCO makes a strong case for mother-tongue instruction in the country in its annual India education report. UNESCO's 2025 "Bhasha Matters" report calls for a national mission in India to strengthen Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) through policy reforms, teacher training, and digital equity. This aligns with India's NEP 2020 and constitutional mandates like Article 350A, emphasizing that learning in a familiar language is the foundation for educational inclusion and quality.

Introduction- UNESCO's Call for Action

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has formally called for the establishment of a National Mission in India dedicated to strengthening mother-tongue instruction. This call to action is detailed in its latest flagship publication.

About the Annual India Education Report 2025

Title- The report is titled "Bhasha Matters".

Edition- This is the seventh edition of UNESCO's State of the Education Report for India.

Core Theme- The central focus is on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE).

Structure- It outlines ten core recommendations aimed at transforming India's education policy to better accommodate linguistic diversity.

Key Recommendations from the Report

The report provides a comprehensive roadmap for implementing multilingual education effectively.

Policy & Institutional Framework

State-Level Policies- Adopt and operationalize clear state-level language-in-education policies. These must be firmly grounded in the principles of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE).

National Mission- Establish a dedicated National Mission for MTB-MLE to ensure focused implementation.

Coordination- Strengthen institutional coordination mechanisms to ensure seamless execution across federal and state levels.

Teacher Capacity & Development

Recruitment & Standards- Strengthen teacher recruitment and deployment processes. Professional standards must be updated to explicitly include multilingual competence.

Teacher Education- Reform both pre-service (B.Ed, D.El.Ed) and in-service teacher training programs to embed multilingual pedagogy at all educational stages.

Learning Resources & Assessment

Material Development- Develop and distribute high-quality multilingual learning materials.

Assessment- Create assessment tools that are linguistically appropriate across all grades, ensuring students are tested in languages they understand.

Community & Inclusive Practice

Community Participation- Institutionalize the participation of local communities in schooling.

Indigenous Knowledge- actively integrate Indigenous knowledge systems into school practices.

Gender Responsiveness- Integrate a gender-responsive MTB-MLE framework specifically across middle, secondary, and alternative schooling to ensure girls and marginalized groups are not left behind.

Technology & Digital Equity

Digital Infrastructure- Leverage digital public infrastructure to provide inclusive, multilingual support for teachers and students.

Inclusive Technology- Invest in inclusive language technologies (like translation tools and localized content).

Bridging the Gap- actively work to bridge the digital divide that often correlates with linguistic marginalization.

Sustainable Financing- Ensure sustainable, equitable, and inclusive financing specifically allocated for MTB-MLE initiatives and language-responsive technologies.

Constitutional & Policy Basis for Mother Tongue-Based Education in India

India has a strong legal and policy foundation supporting multilingualism.

Legal Framework

Provision	Description
Article 350A	Directs States to provide primary education in the mother tongue to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.
Article 29(1)	A Fundamental Right that protects the right of citizens to conserve their distinct language, script, and culture.
Article 14 & 15	Guarantees of equity and non-discrimination, which legally supports strengthening access to education in a familiar language.
Eighth Schedule	Provides constitutional recognition to 22 languages, encouraging their use and development.

Policy Framework

Policy/Act	Provision
NEP 2020	Recommends mother tongue/regional language as the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, and preferably till Grade 8.
RTE Act, 2009	Allows flexibility for States to adopt a child-friendly language of instruction.
Samagra Shiksha	A centrally sponsored scheme that supports the development of multilingual textbooks and teacher training.

Significance of Mother-Tongue Based Education

According to UNESCO, instruction in a student's home language is not just a cultural preference but a pedagogical necessity.

Educational Inclusion- It brings marginalized groups into the fold of formal education.

Preservation of Diversity- It acts as a vital tool for preserving global linguistic diversity.

Improved Learning Outcomes- It is the "foundation for better learning," ensuring concepts are understood rather than rote-memorized.

About UNESCO

Full Form- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Nature- A specialized agency of the United Nations.

Mission- To build peace and security through global cooperation in education, science, culture, and communication.

Establishment- 1945.

Headquarters- Paris, France.

Key Conventions & Programmes

Category	Details
Conventions	World Heritage Convention (1972) Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) Protection & Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)
Flagship Programmes	World Heritage Sites Man, and the Biosphere (MAB) Global Geoparks Memory of the World

Source- <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2025/Dec/17/unesco-makes-a-strong-case-for-mother-tongue-instruction-in-the-country-in-its-annual-india-education-report>