

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

I AM glad to inform the readers of *The Annual of Urdu Studies* and the Urdu-speaking community across the globe that a very ambitious project to analyze and determine the status of Urdu language and education in contemporary India is being undertaken by the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL). Towards initiating and achieving this historic goal, which in fact was long overdue, the NCPUL is going to organize a workshop which will help determine the agenda of Urdu education for the twenty-first century in India, so that the existing network of Urdu education is strengthened through evolving a systematic plan. All would agree that a lot of work is needed in this field. Since Independence no proper agenda for Urdu education has been set, nor have any strategies been worked out in detail. Therefore, it is very obvious that any attempt to promote and spread the use of Urdu will bear no fruit until the foundations upon which the Urdu education system is based are strengthened and the objectives are very clearly defined.

The National Council for Promotion of Urdu language, being the highest policy-making body of the Government of India responsible for the promotion of Urdu, sincerely desires the cooperation of Urdu-speaking people and their representative organizations, particularly voluntary organizations, in framing policies to achieve our goals. At the same time it also seeks the cooperation of organizations working in the area of the promotion of other minority languages.

As I have stated earlier, the Council is launching a project which, on its completion, will produce an authoritative document, providing guidance to the Government as well as to the Urdu populace, regarding Urdu education in the coming years. Eminent educationists and linguists are involved in this project and I do hope that during this workshop we will be able to prepare a questionnaire encompassing all essential aspects relevant to the execution of this project. One significant part of the project will be to highlight the role of Urdu in the public domain and its impact on other languages. The impact of Urdu on other languages is not limited only to being a spoken part of many of the dialects/languages of this country; it is also a widely accepted fact that Urdu has been instrumental in polishing, strengthening and furthering them as literary languages with a national character. The educational aspect of these languages has

also been influenced by the cultural elegance inherent in the ethos of Urdu. People going beyond the spoken language and getting involved with the formal learning situations for these other languages will see that their syllabi are determined by the same form of Urdu which has influenced the concerned regional language. For these reasons, the survey proposed to be carried out under this project will not only be an academic endeavor of significant linguistic import but will also open avenues for further discussion on the issue of Urdu education.

A survey of the state of the Urdu education system throughout India will be carried out in the second, and major, part of the project, which of course is of vital importance to the Urdu-speaking people. The basic aim of this survey will be to collect reliable data and prepare an official document on the state of Urdu education, as well as to study and analyze the sociopolitical and psycho-educational situation and the problems of the Urdu-speaking linguistic minority. One important aspect of the second part will deal with the problems of Urdu teaching and learning. This again will be done to collect data which will then be used as feedback for preparing an effective blueprint for a better system of teaching and learning Urdu.

The third part of the project will involve a study and analysis of the legal and constitutional provisions for Urdu and will deal particularly with the constitutional safeguards for Urdu and the legal tangles related to the constitutional rights of Urdu that have come up over the last ten years.

I will make a special request to all the participants to collect and forward to us details of all the known petitions, filed at different points of time in different Courts of Judicature, questioning the legal and constitutional status of Urdu and its education.

Related to the second part of the project, as described above, I have some questions in my mind. However there may be more questions which I have failed to consider and which the readers of the *AUS* may have pondered. I request them to enlighten us on these aspects. Their suggestions will be included in the project. I am sure that answers to the following questions will provide the foundation of the proposed survey:

1. How many schools (from Primary to Secondary level) of secular education with modern curriculum exist across the country that teach using Urdu as the medium of education or teach Urdu as an optional subject?
2. How many students are enrolled in both categories in these schools?
3. What is the proportion of dropouts in both categories?
4. How many Urdu teachers are available/regularly employed in both categories?
5. How many of the above are trained and equipped for teaching Urdu in

both the categories?

6. Which institutions provide training facilities for Urdu teachers?

7. Are Urdu textbooks in various subjects available for students?

8. How many of the above textbooks are original works and how many are translations?

9. What is the syllabus for teaching in both categories?

10. What associated and supplementary material is available to students for reference and further study in both categories?

11. Has there been any academic audit of the difficulty level of the textbooks whether in translation or original?

12. How many pupils come from *madrasas* or go back to *madrasas* in the evening for religious education?

13. What kind of problems do Urdu medium (wherever it is available) students face at university level?

I understand that no provision for Urdu medium education is available after the senior secondary level. It seems likely that there will be a high rate of dropouts at university level because the Urdu medium students find themselves at a great disadvantage in having to switch over to a Hindi or English medium. It may also be assumed from the present situation that an Urdu medium student can hardly achieve excellence by graduation because of a totally different medium. This question must be examined thoroughly. I am emphasizing here only the different “medium of instruction” but I am sure that Urdu medium students at the University also find themselves in a totally different world.

I hope to receive comments and suggestions from the readers of the *AUS* which will cover these and related points and after the workshop we will revise the questionnaire in light of these suggestions as well as the discussions held during the workshop. I am sure that the findings of the project will become a valuable document for formulating the agenda for Urdu education. Suggestions on the methodology of the project are also welcome.

Please send your suggestions to:

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