Report: Week 3

Language and the Indian Education System

Focus on Problem Area & Sub-Areas, Insights & Opportunities

DEP 302: System Design project
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Contents

1. Abstract
2. System Mapping
3. Problem areas and sub-system mapping
4. Research and Insights
5. Problems identified and ideation
6. Next steps

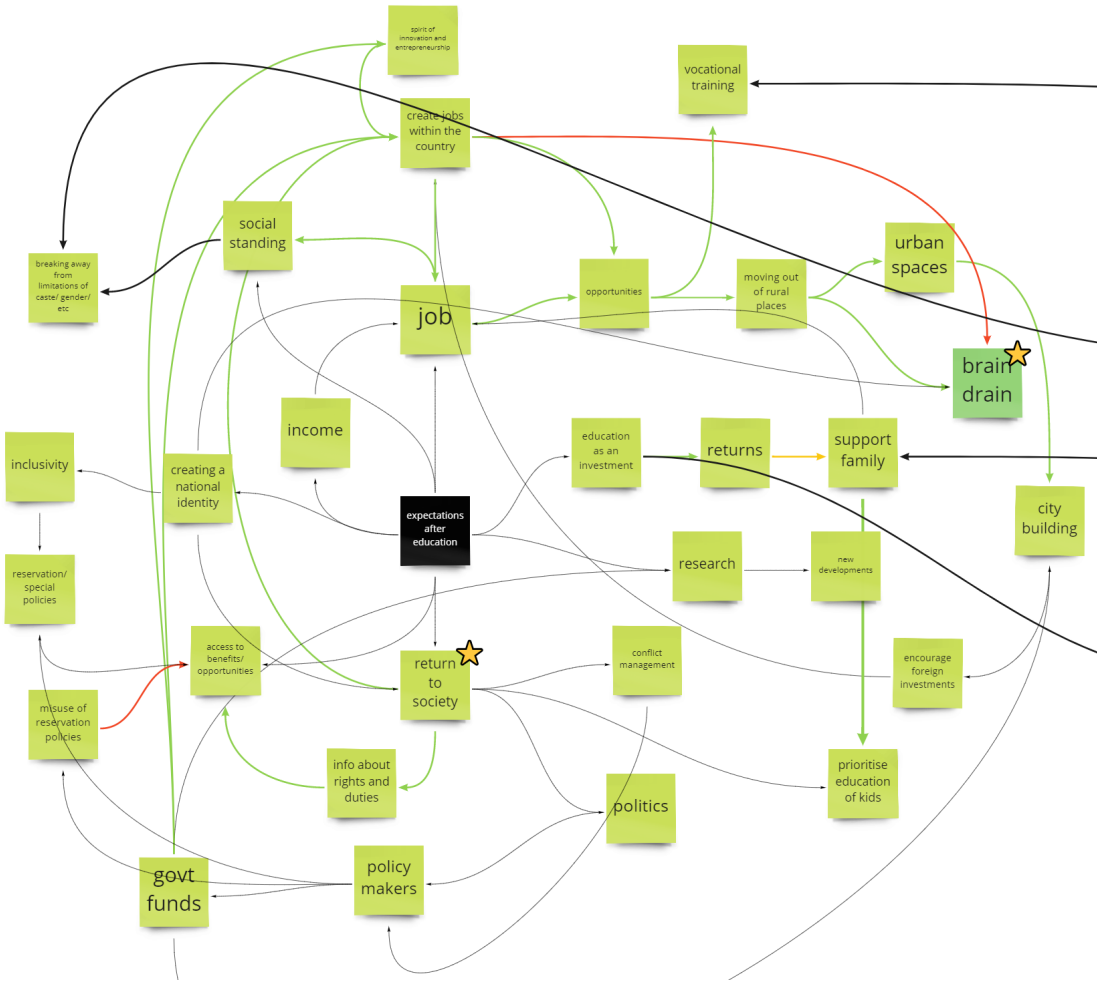
Abstract

Language can mean different things to different people. How and why it is learned plays an important role in the education system. In a country like India, with so many languages, languages can also play a divisive role and is essential to creating a national identity and fostering inclusivity. We look at the current language learning policies and try to identify problem areas that require design interventions.

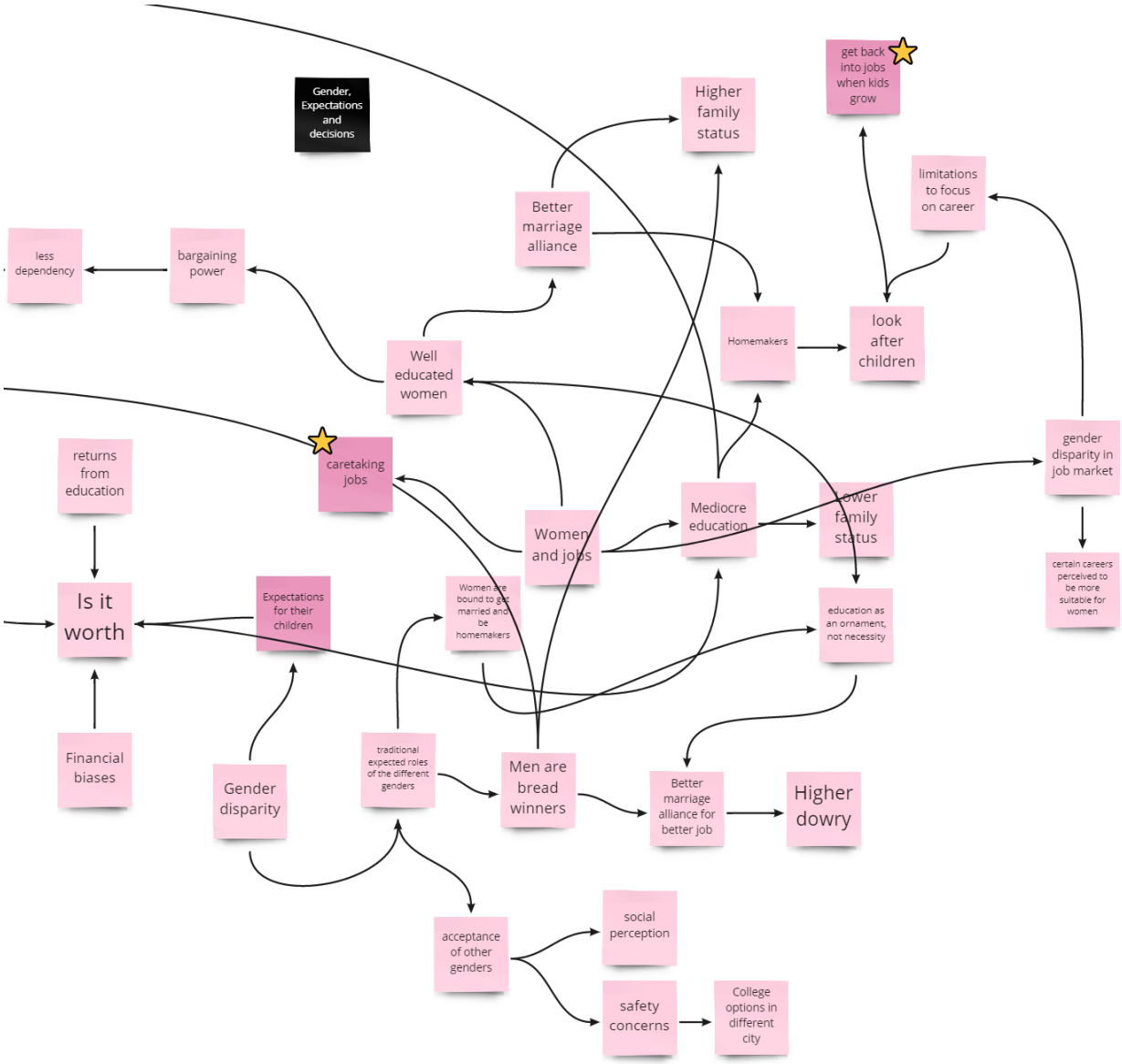
System mapping

We started out mapping the entire Indian education system, trying to create separate causal loops for linked parts of the super-system. All the below-mentioned topics were mapped out in the process of identifying a suitable problem area that would be worth working on.

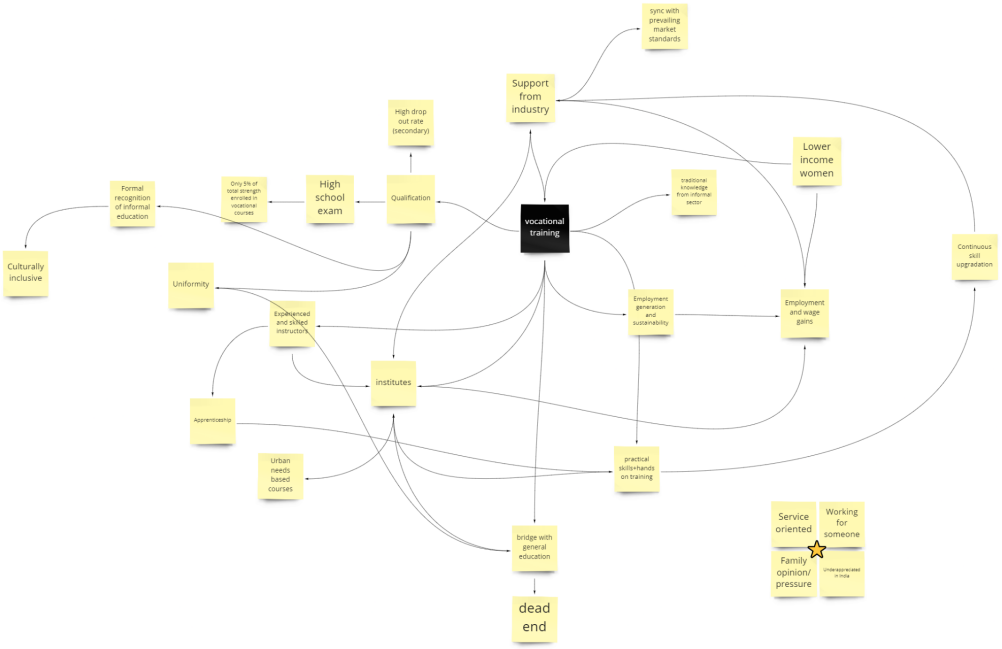
Expectations after education



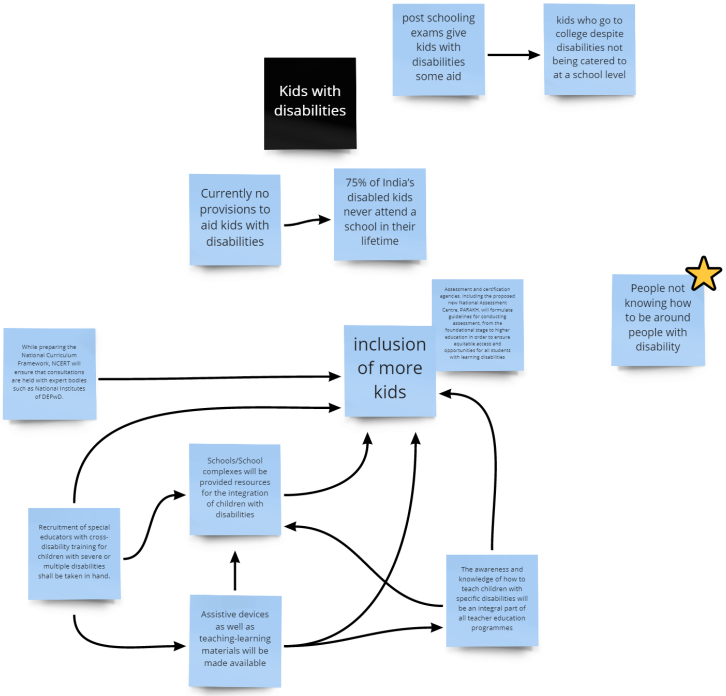
Gender, Expectations and decisions



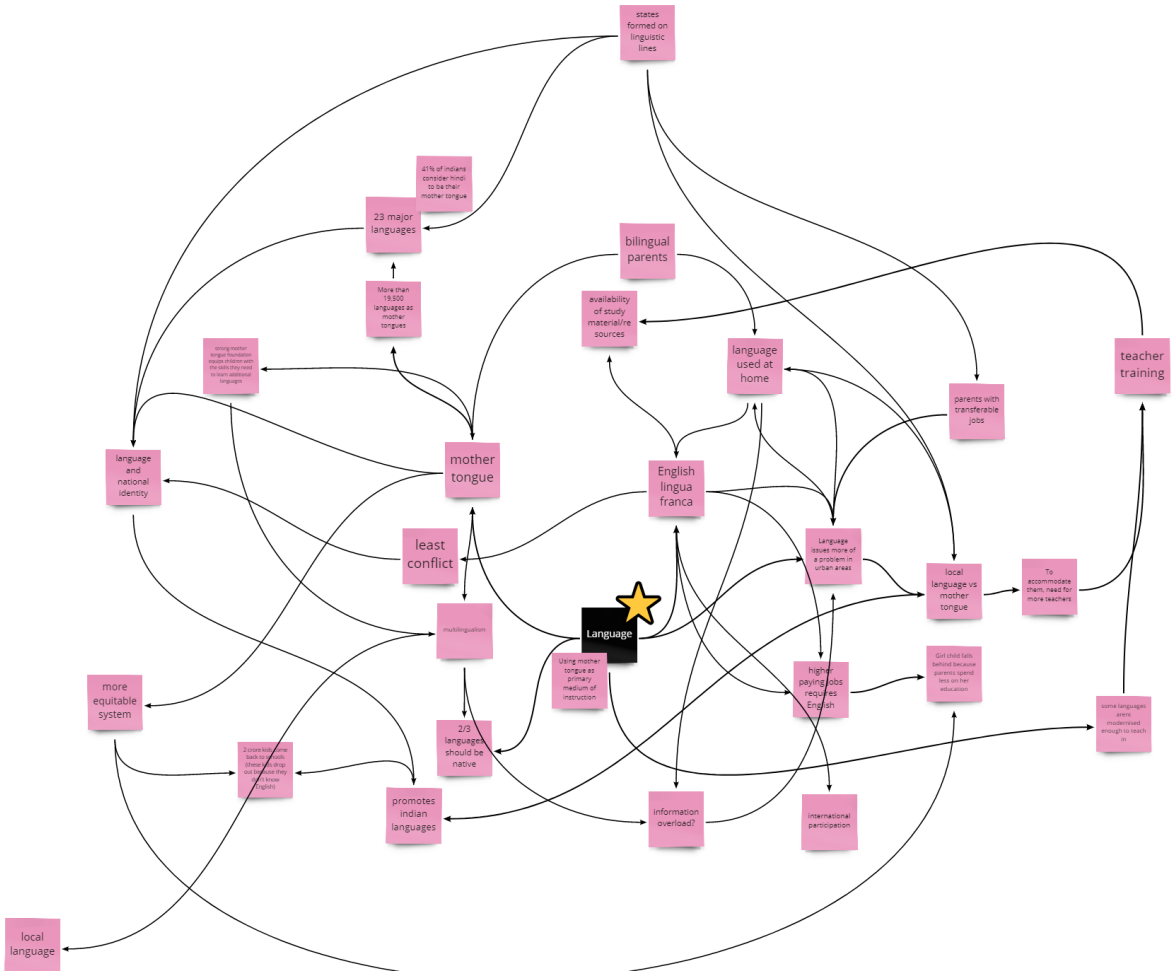
Vocational training



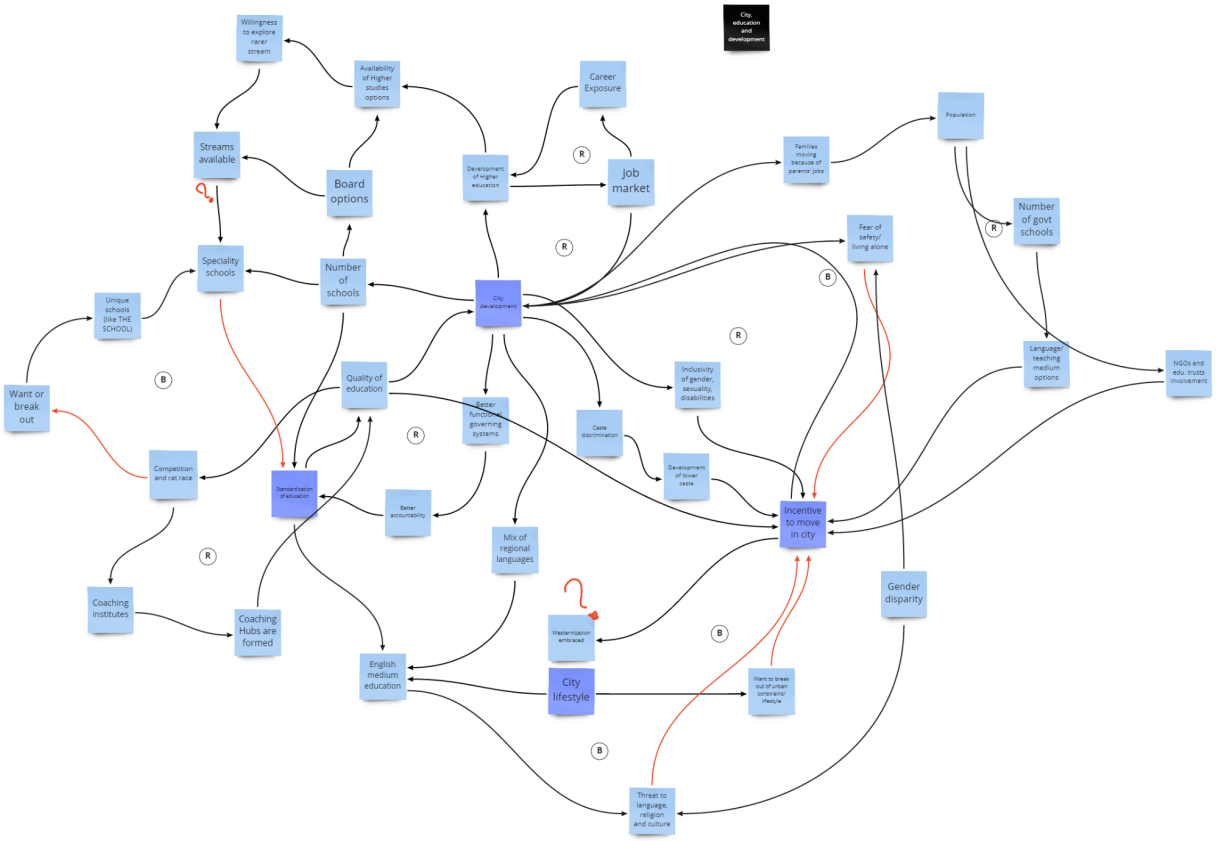
Kids with disabilities



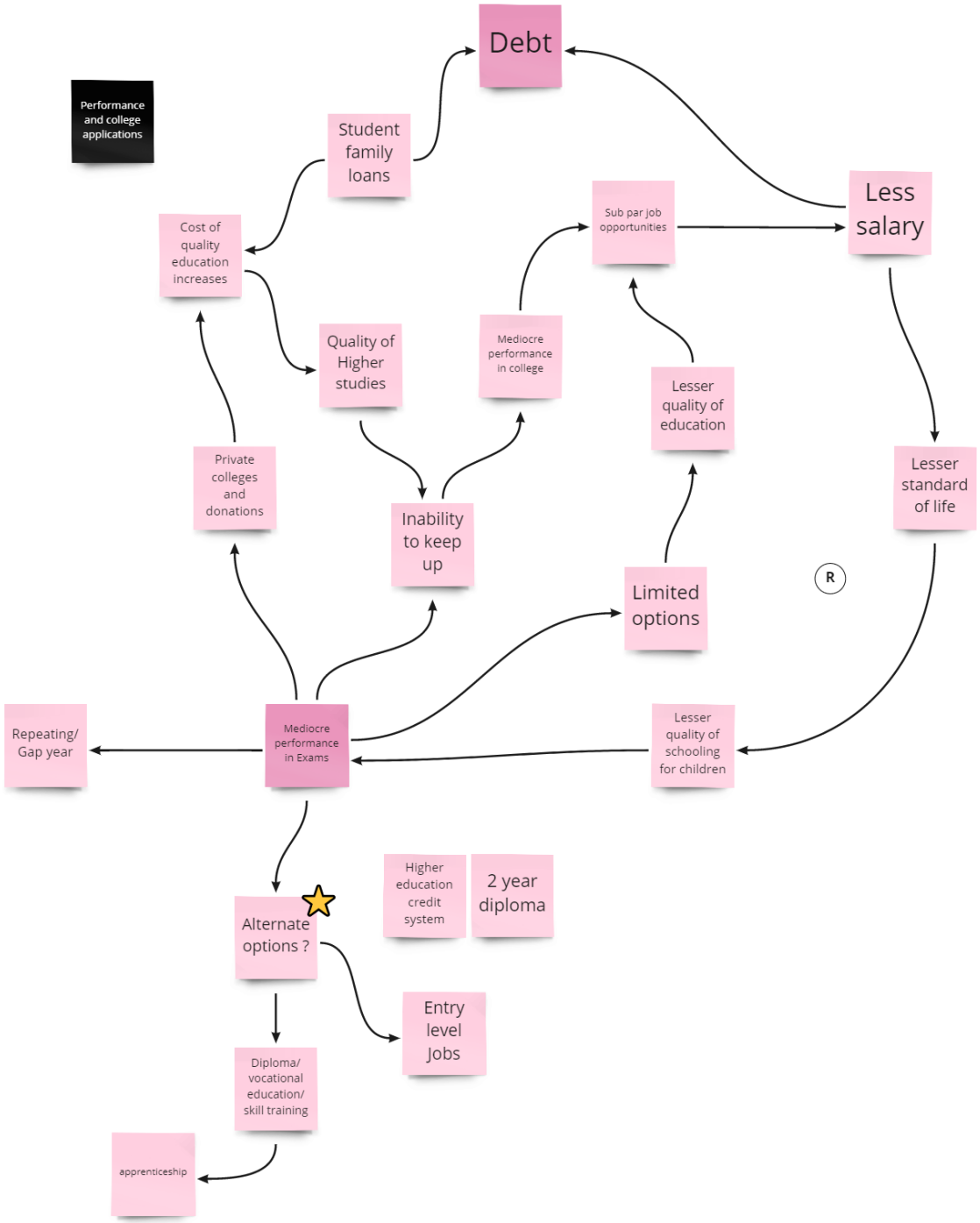
Language


states formed on linguistic lines
41% of indians consider hindi to be their mother tongue
23 major languages
More than 19,500 languages as mother tongues
bilingual parents
availability of study material/resources
language used at home
teacher training
parents with transferable jobs
strong mother tongue foundation equips children with the skills they need to learn additional languages
language and national identity
mother tongue
English lingua franca
least conflict
Language issues more of a problem in urban areas
local language vs mother tongue
To accommodate them, need for more teachers
multilingualism
Language
Using mother tongue as primary medium of instruction
higher paying jobs requires English
Girl child falls behind because parents spend less on her education
more equitable system
2 crore kids come back to schools (these kids drop out because they don't know English)
2/3 languages should be native
some languages arent modernised enough to teach in
promotes indian languages
information overload?
international participation
local language

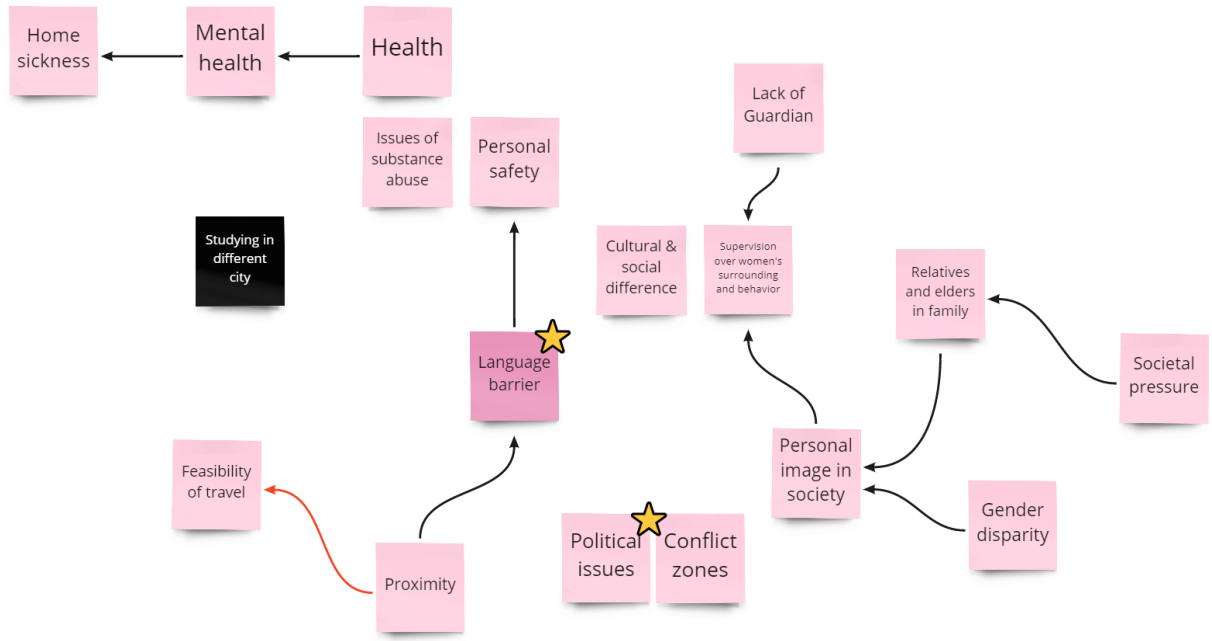
City, education and development



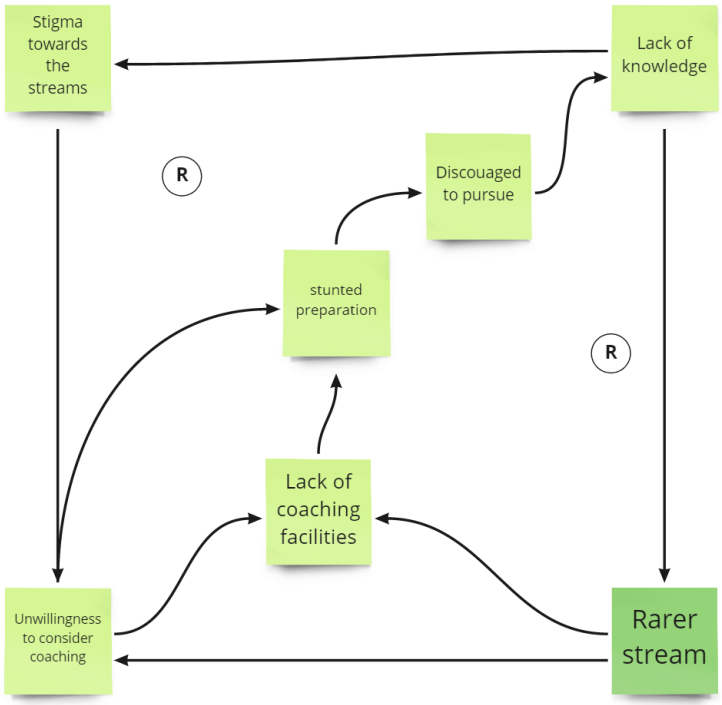
Performance and College application



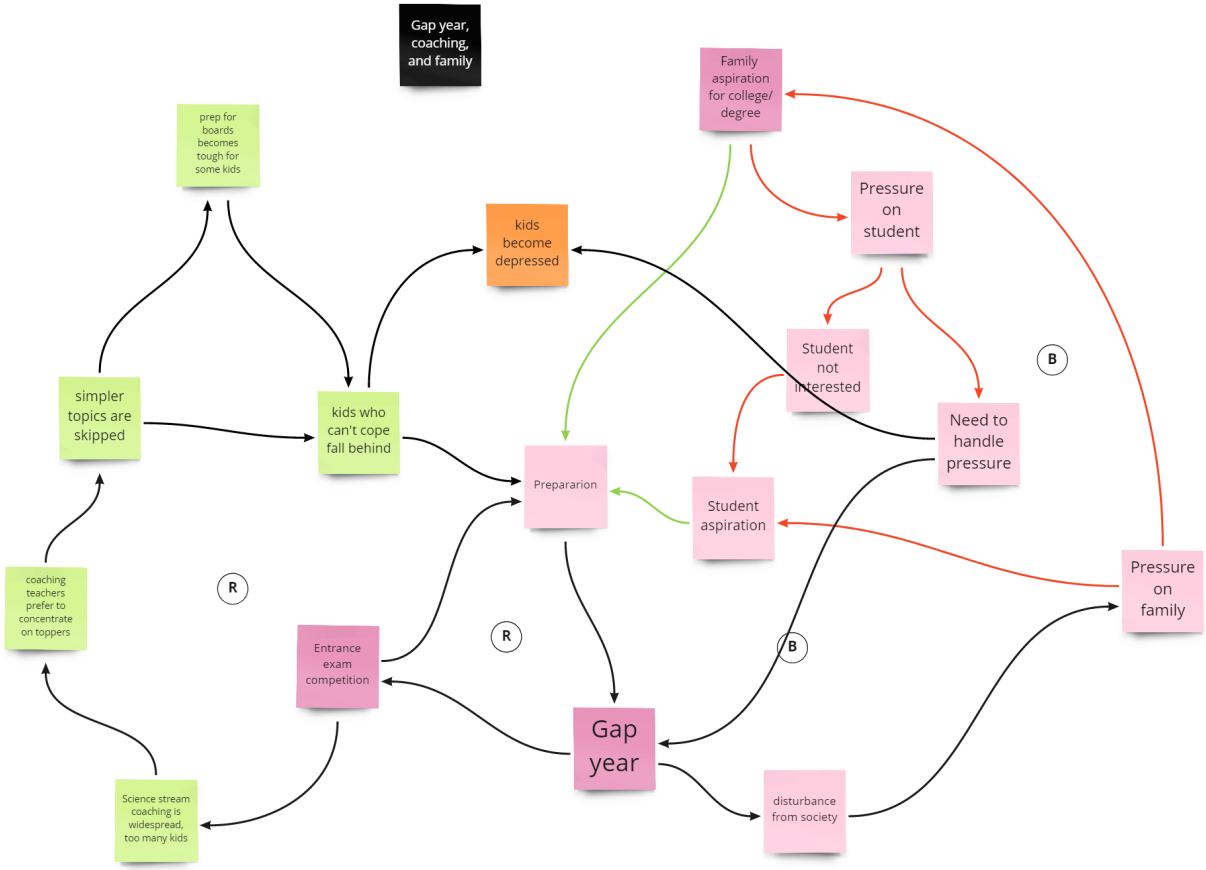
Studying in different city



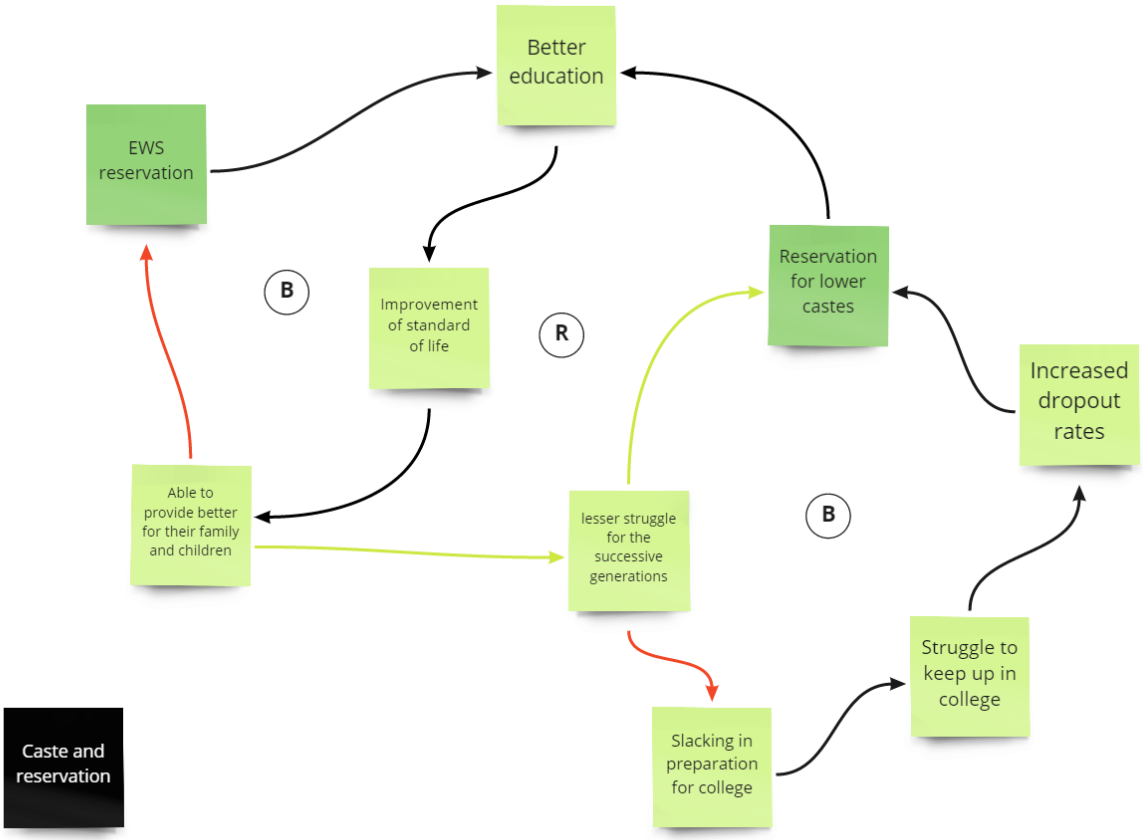
Coaching, preparation and stream

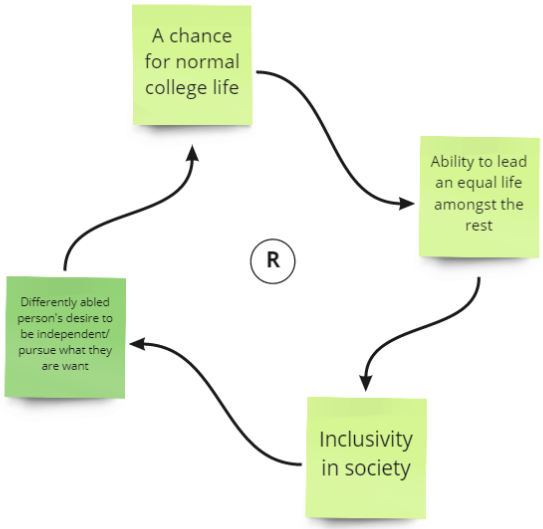


Gap year, coaching, and family

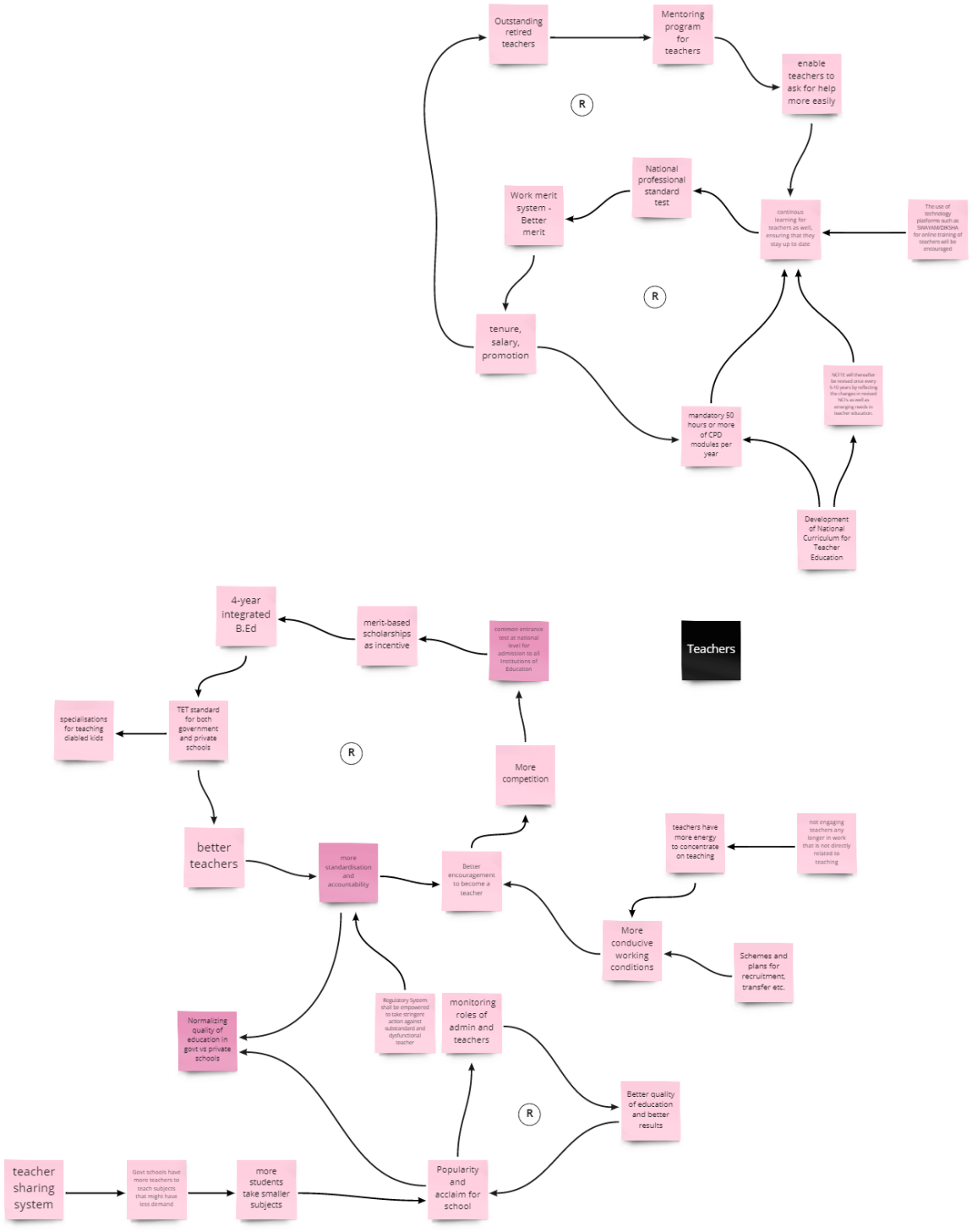


Caste and reservation





Teachers


Outstanding retired teachers
Mentoring program for teachers
enable teachers to ask for help more easily
R
National professional standard test
Work merit system - Better merit
continous learning for teachers as well, ensuring that they stay up to date
The use of technology platforms such as SWAYAM/DIKSHA for online training of teachers will be encouraged
R
tenure, salary, promotion
NCFTE will thereafter be revised once every 5-10 years by reflecting the changes in revised NCFs as well as emerging needs in teacher education.
mandatory 50 hours or more of CPD modules per year
Development of National Curriculum for Teacher Education
4-year integrated B.Ed
merit-based scholarships as incentive
common entrance test at national level for admission to all institutions of Education
Teachers
specialisations for teaching diabled kids
TET standard for both government and private schools
R
More competition
better teachers
more standardisation and accountability
Better encouragement to become a teacher
teachers have more energy to concentrate on teaching
not engaging teachers any longer in work that is not directly related to teaching
More conducive working conditions
Schemes and plans for recruitment, transfer etc.
Regulatory System shall be empowered to take stringent action against substandard and dysfunctional teacher
monitoring roles of admin and teachers
Normalizing quality of education in govt vs private schools
Better quality of education and better results
R
teacher sharing system
Govt schools have more teachers to teach subjects that might have less demand
more students take smaller subjects
Popularity and acclaim for school

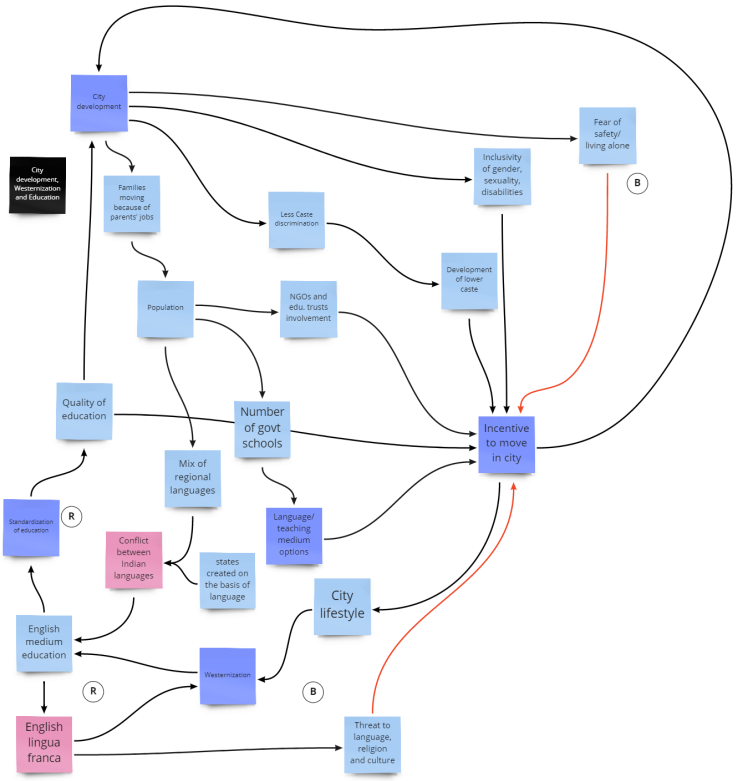
Problem Areas and sub-system Mapping

This is where we define the problem area and further map out its sub-parts to better understand it. We made a list of all the problem areas we identified and further prioritized them. Language was the part which we decided to focus on as it had its influence and issues in most parts of the system. It also is a key segment of the 2020 NEP. Taking Prof. Promod's advice, we went ahead.

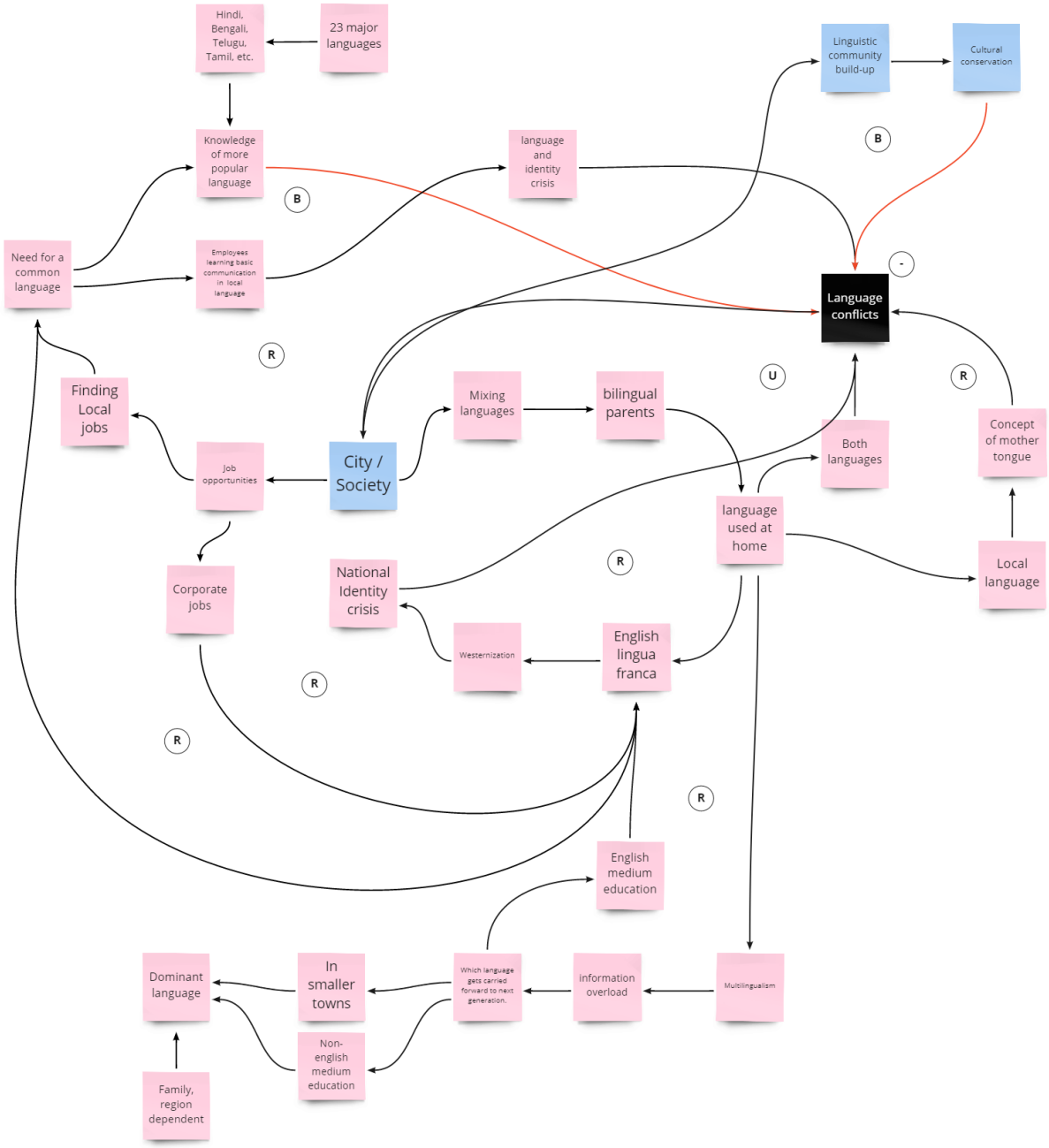
We realized the importance of Urban society and education with language and decided that this would be like a backdrop on which we looked at everything. With some framework, we took the existing mapping done for language to start from.\

Further making causal loops of subparts including looking at Urban development, westernization and education and the behaviors of people, the conflicts of language within a society, and the threats and benefits of the knowledge of different languages in regional, familial and personal identity contexts.

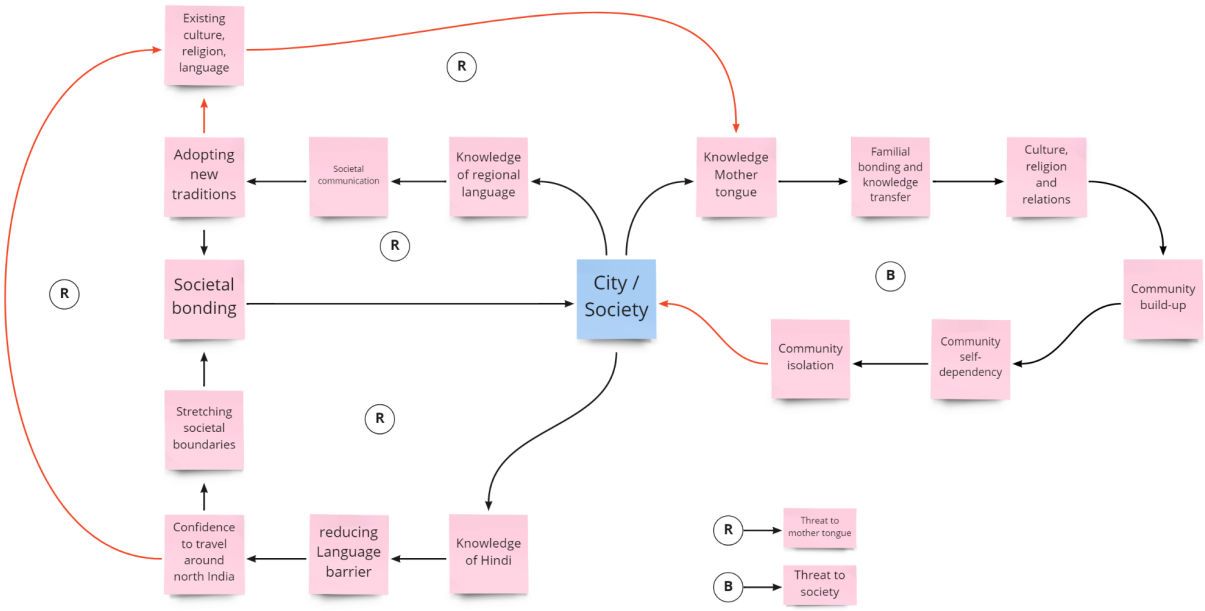
Urban development, Westernization and Education



Society & Language conflicts



Threats & Benefits



Research and Insights

Learning a Language

Learning multiple languages impacts a child's cognitive abilities and is shown to enhance a variety of non-verbal skills including conflict resolution. Studies have shown that it is easiest to pick up languages between the ages 5 to 7 as the brain naturally acquires language skills before and during this period whereas in the later years, it is consciously learnt. However, educators also need to ensure that students aren't overwhelmed with an overload of information.

Geo-political conflicts

We took a look at the languages offered in different states around the country and their reasons for doing the same. The North-South divide was also examined.

3 Language policy and English

The current 3-Language policy as highlighted in NEP 2020 and its evolution from the 60s were analysed. It was also concluded that people, especially in urban spaces and among the middle and upper class, viewed English as a symbol of better life.

Insights

One of our major insights was how people viewed English. It was associated with liberalism as opposed to native languages and was perceived to hold a kind of transformative power. This attitude also reflects on the kinds of aspirations for the future and the returns people expect from the investment they make towards education. We also looked at how multilingual homes in urban spaces tended to use english as the language spoken at home. City building and development also plays an important role in the attitude towards vernacular languages. However focussing on English can also accentuate the already existing gender divide in the country.

Considering the fact that the formation of Indian states were based on linguistic divides, we also took a look at the role language plays in an individual/community's cultural identity, the conflicts involved with learning a new language and how it hinders finding a compromise amongst the various parties involved.

Problems Identified and Ideation

From the insights we found, we took a few problem areas and ideated a few possible solutions for them.

Development of city is a major element

Current policies, teacher distribution and infrastructure gives kids studying in major cities a huge advantage over the other kids because the development of a city impacts the education the child has. This can be turned into a level playing field but making policy changes.

Community build up is a natural way of handling threat to culture or religion

When people have a common ground and area to socialise with their linguistic communities (like an app), they keep in touch with their heritage

Regional language conflicts and westernisation

Language being a huge part of identity finds itself often at the center of conflict between many states in the country or in conflict happening when south indians feel like Hindi is being imposed on them. Educating people against fear and insecurity about new languages may reduce the conflicts that take place.

Gender Disparity with respect to language

Girl child education is still considered as less important compared to male education in rural areas and economically backward urban areas. NEP can potentially cause a gap between the quality of education of both genders in this respect (where boys might end up learning english much faster than girls). To mitigate this issue one solution is to put forth some policies (affirmative action), create more campaigns on girl child education, or address the root causes girls end up dropping out of school (housework, lack of facilities, etc.)

Multilingual homes end up using English as their common language

Campaigns to stress the importance of mother tongues and keeping in touch with our heritage can help combat this rapid westernisation.

Expectations from education, returns from investments

Revamping how kids are taught language can help them set more realistic goals which they can achieve. This can be achieved by changing the curriculum and training teachers to teach kids in a certain way instead of another.

Inclusivity

By promoting cross culture activities and global partnerships or even country wide participation, we can bridge the gap and bring different communities closer.

National Identity and Brain Drain

By promoting and celebrating multilingualism and our heritage, we can unite communities and possibly create strong bonds which could hopefully reduce brain drain. We can do this by the method of storytelling through educational infomercials.

“Why us and not them?”

To ease the tension between hindi and regional languages we can try to gradually shift people’s attitudes about other languages through educational infomercials and storytelling.

Different Needs

Indian schools can be broadly classified into 4 types (elite private schools, private schools, government schools with adequate english education and government schools unable to provide good english education), they all have different requirements and needs but under current policies, they are all treated the same. Creating a different curriculum for the different types keeping in mind their language learning needs can immensely help kids study and get ready for the job market. Creating a second and third language curriculum based on needs and wants could benefit more than rote learning of grammar currently taking place in these schools. English should be taught to kids (or as a medium of instruction) based on the needs of the children in that particular school.

Next Steps

1. Finalizing idea.
2. In-depth research and ideation for the problem.
3. Identifying target sector and stakeholders.