Research Paper

Cultural Diversity in the School Classroom: The Transformative Role of NEP 2020

Milan Barman[1]*, Tupai Barman[2], Sudeshna Majumdar[3], Arabinda Bala[4], Ankur Nandi[5], Dr. Tapash Das[6], Prof. (Dr.) Tarini Halder[7]

ABSTRACT

Culture is the unique identity of human being. It is a medium through which we connect society and gain knowledge. India is a multicultural country; variety of peoples, different cultures, different religions and speaking different languages. The purpose of the study is to explain challenges in promoting cultural diversity in the school classroom, to investigate the roles of NEP 2020 in cultural diversity in the school classroom. This study uses a qualitative research design, specially it is a documentary-based and review-based study. Primary Data will be collected from National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reports and others secondary data will be collected from various high reputed journals, articles publications and etc. NEP 2020 has importances role to the prompts of Indian arts, culture and scripture. This paper aims to focus on the various dimensions and factors that play an important role in promoting cultural diversity in the classroom environment as recommended by the NEP 2020. With a focus on inclusion and holistic education, NEP 2020 aims to transform the educational landscape by fostering an environment that celebrates diverse cultural backgrounds. NEP 2020 strives to provide an education system that acknowledges India's vast cultural variety while preparing students to be global citizens by encouraging multilingualism, incorporating indigenous knowledge systems, and supporting cultural festivities. In India's heterogeneous society, this approach is crucial to fostering an atmosphere of respect, empathy, and understanding.

[1]Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, West Bengal, India.
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5290 3460
[2]Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, University of Kalyani, Kalyani, West Bengal, India.
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0291-8439
[3]Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, West Bengal, India.
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0326-8259
[4]Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, West Bengal, India.
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-2596-781X
[5]Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Education, University of Kalyani, Kalyani, West Bengal, India.
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3459-3429
[6]Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol, West Bengal, India.
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4619-0009
[7]Professor, Department of Education, University of Kalyani, Kalyani, West Bengal, India.
ORCiD: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8807-7182
*Corresponding Author

Education is a powerful tool for national integration and celebration of cultural diversity (Sharma, 2020). Culture is a multifaceted concept that effectively understands, respects, and responds to the cultural backgrounds and identities of societies (Eden et al., 2024). Culture is an integral part of human being (Adom et al., 2024). Cultural diversity is one aspect of social, political and cultural change that can affect our society deeply and is also rapidly changing (Boddington, 2008). India is a multicultural country; variety of peoples, different cultures, different religions and speaking different languages (Mandal et al., 2024). According to National Educational Policy (2020) argues that culture is important not only for the nation but also for the individual. Cultural diversity refers to the coexistence of different knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, religions, languages, abilities, disabilities, genders, races, ethnicities, nationalities and sexual orientations among human (Lin, 2020). Cultural diversity enhances cognitive and creative abilities in individual, it is helping individual happiness (National Educational Policy [NEP], 2020). India is a cultural diversity country as well as multi-lingual country.

Cultural diversity is the reality of different ethnic or cultural groups within a group or society, which affects various aspects of a school's operations, from the teaching and learning process to cultural diversity (Danso, 2018). Cultural diversity is always associated with national or ethnic aspects, but rather with particular social groups or activities and, thus, with the associated communication systems.

Multiculturalism
Multiculturalism is not about differences and identities, but about those [differences] that are embedded and sustained in culture, which is a set of values and norms that a group of people use to organize their individual and group lives and to interpret the world (Parekh, 2006). Multiculturalism recognizes the diversity of human behavior and characteristics within cultures. For example, multiculturalism reflects differences in language, education, customs, and attitudes among individuals (Salama et al., 2014). Multiculturalism encompasses the belief that every student should have an equal opportunity to learn in school, regardless of their gender, social status, or racial, ethnic, or cultural characteristics (Banks & Banks, 2010).

Cultural diversity in classroom
Cultural diversity in the classroom is defined by differences in mother tongue, religion, ethnicity, and cultural norms (Tartwijk et al., 2009). Cultural diversity in the classroom reflects the unique mix of cultural backgrounds, languages, and experiences that define the modern educational environment, which serves as a microcosm of diverse cultures (Pandey, 2024). Cultural diversity includes both schools and classrooms, where students from many backgrounds come together and where social interactions, cultural backgrounds are evident. Several aspects of cultural diversity in the classroom or school have been linked to an identity climate based on ethnic or traditional culture. Culturally diverse classroom environments encourage multiculturalism, communication, and teamwork, and culturally diverse schools can serve as ideal settings for teaching critical intercultural skills (Schwarzenthal et al., 2020)

Objectives of the Study
- To explain challenges in promoting cultural diversity in the school classroom.
- To understand the roles of NEP 2020 in cultural diversity in the school classroom.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study uses a qualitative research design, specially it is a documentary-based and review-based study. Primary Data will be collected from National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reports and others secondary data will be collected from various high reputed journals, articles publications and etc.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Objectives- 1: Challenges in promoting cultural diversity in the classroom.
Fostering cultural diversity is essential to creating an inclusive learning environment in the classroom, but there are a number of challenges that can prevent this from happening.

Here are some of the main ones:

- **Language Barriers:** The NEP 2020 policy encourages teaching in one's mother tongue or regional language. But given India's diverse linguistic landscape, implementing these guidelines uniformly across the country will be challenging (Marne & Deshmukh, 2022). Language barriers one of the most prevalent challenges in cultural diversity in classroom, it can make it difficult for students who speak a language different from the medium of instruction to participate fully in their classes (Pandey, 2024).

- **Lack of funding:** Funding is a one of the major difficulties of implementation of cultural diversity in school classroom, Given the limited resources available for education, implementing the new policy will require a large investment, which presents a major hurdle (Nagpal, 2023). Achieving multicultural classrooms in schools requires substantial funding, and policy has no specific direction on how this funding will be generated, Although the policy mentions a National Research Foundation, it is not clear how it will be funded (Biswas, 2023). In India, only 6% of GDP is spent annually on education sector (Soni, 2022; Yadav, 2022; Chauhan & Singh, 2023).

- **Cultural Bias and Stereotypes**: Cultural diversity can be demonstrated in differences in social conventions, interactions and educational expectations, it can be difficult for teachers to negotiate these cultural differences while maintaining an inclusive and respectful learning environment for each student, addressing cultural preconceptions and understanding ethnic backgrounds is crucial to reducing these difficulties (Pandey, 2024). Classroom dynamics can be influenced by preexisting biases and stereotypes. Fostering an inclusive environment can be difficult because students may experience marginalization or discrimination because of their cultural background.

- **Lack of ethnicity:** In multicultural classrooms, ethnicity has been found to be one of the main barriers that can significantly hinder communication and engagement between teachers and students (Den Brock & Levy, 2005; Den Brok, Levy, Rodriguez, & Wubbels, 2002).

- **Lack of infrastructure**: A robust infrastructure, including multi-media based audio-visual technology, skill-driven online resources and digital classrooms, will be necessary to achieve NEP-2020 standards and overcome the complexities of

classroom instruction, which is going to be the biggest challenges in the future, especially for government-run institutions (Saxena & Kanwar, 2021). In India, many schools lack infrastructure, such as proper buildings, adequate classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and sports facilities (Nagpal, 2023). The implementation of NEP 2020's goals of equitable education, universal access, and digital inclusion presents difficulties for India because there are significant regional differences in infrastructure and resources (Mandal, 2023).

- **Insufficient Teacher Training**: Teacher training is a crucial component of the NEP, which focuses on enhancing teachers' learning experiences and developing a joyful, child-cantered approach (Kaur, 2024). To make this incredibly innovative curriculum a success, teachers must perform with extreme efficiency and skill (Soni, 2022). Teachers that are qualified and aware of the demands of education are what we need. It is possible that many teachers lack the necessary tools or training to successfully integrate cultural diversity into their lesson plans. Engaging all children can be difficult without cultural competency-focused professional development for teachers. The most common challenge we will be facing is lack of trained teachers (Soni, 2022).

- **Lack of Capacity Building:** The NEP 2020 emphasizes the need for capacity building among educators, administrators, and other professionals. But it can be difficult to find resources for the depth and scope of training to familiarize them with new curriculum revisions, assessment methods and pedagogical methods, and successfully communicate with all stakeholders (Mandal, 2023). Strong classroom communities built on empathy, collaboration, and respect for one another can be formed in multicultural classrooms. To encourage respect for diversity, active listening, and productive student discourse, educators can establish inclusive classroom rules and expectations (Pandey, 2024).

The NEP 2020 policy aims to promote cultural diversity in the classroom, but challenges such as language barriers, lack of funding, cultural biases and stereotypes, lack of ethnicity, inadequate infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and lack of capacity building are observed in fulfilling these goals. In a diverse country like India, where education in regional languages is a goal of NEP 2020, it will be difficult to implement, as the language barrier is a major challenge. Similarly, the lack of funding for training programs and infrastructure in educational institutions worsens the situation. Additionally, cultural biases and stereotypes continue to influence classroom dynamics, often creating a kind of anarchy based on students' ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Inadequate training for teachers in managing cultural diversity and the absence of capacity-building initiatives compound these challenges, making it difficult to create inclusive classrooms where all students feel engaged and supported.

In conclusion, while there are still many barriers to fostering cultural diversity in the classroom, they can be overcome with the right support, resources, and dedication to an inclusive education system. Ensuring that policies like NEP 2020 are supported by effective implementation approaches, such as focused funding, teacher preparation, and the development of a culturally sensitive school community, is the way forward.

Objectives- 2: The roles of NEP 2020 in cultural diversity in the classroom.
Cultural diversity in the Indian classroom is promoted through several important initiatives under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Its main roles are as follows:

- **Reforms in school curriculum and pedagogy:** NEP 2020 advocates for a curriculum that reflects India's rich cultural heritage. The school's curriculum and pedagogy will strive to carefully engage students by providing them with 21st century critical skills, focusing more on critical thinking and essential learning, and reducing the amount of material presented in the classroom to emphasize experiential learning (Chauhan & Singh, 2023). Students will have more flexibility and academic options. The entire curriculum needs to be changed, which takes time. At the same time, textbooks must be updated to reflect current needs to help students develop their skills and critical thinking abilities (Ralhan, 2020).

- **Multilingual Education:** The policy gives priority to mother tongue, local languages and regional languages for education till cultural diversity. Students will participate in projects and participate in the 'Languages of India' initiative (Chauhan & Singh, 2023). Also, the policy promotes the use of regional languages alongside Hindi and English. Both the national and state governments work to fund language instructors in all the regional languages of the country, especially those included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution (mandal & mete, 2023).

- **Focus on Holistic Development**: The National Education Policy (2020) places significant emphasis on experiential learning, which promotes learning through practical experimentation, in addition, pedagogy will include general pedagogy, such as storytelling-based pedagogy, sports-integrated education, and art-integrated education (Renu & Chowdhury, 2024). Further, NEP 2020 calls for a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary, and broad-based schooling with adaptable curricula, innovative subject combinations, vocational education integration, and numerous entry and exit points with appropriate certification (Chauhan & Singh, 2023). This holistic approach nurtures an appreciation for cultural differences and similarities. The policy acknowledges the value of school students' holistic development, including their ability to think critically, solve problems, be creative, and learn socioemotionally (Mandal, 2023).

- **Flexible Assessment Practices**: NEP 2020 aims to increase the frequency and structure of assessments of more advanced abilities, such as critical thinking, conceptual clarity, and analysis, in a way that encourages learning and development (Chauhan & Singh, 2023). NEP 2020 mainly emphases on formative assessment rather than summative assessment. Assessment methods are being changed primarily to promote continuous monitoring of learning outcomes (Venkateshwarlu, 2021; Pawar, Phulari et al. 2022). Students will now have to take only three exams in each of the following classes: Class 3, Class 5 and Class 8. Board exams have been eliminated for Class 10 and Class 12, "PARKH" (Performance Assessment Review and Analysis of Knowledge for Overall Development) will complete the school's evaluation or assessment process (Mondal, 2023; NEP, 2020; Reddy, 2020).

- **Promote skill Development**: According to Mandal (2023), NEP-2020 emphasizes the need for skill development and vocational training to increase employment. Life

skills training prepares children for social behaviour, while vocational training addresses the challenge of attributing specific occupations to specific communities. Policymakers must address the reasons for India's lack of vocational education (Marne & Deshmukh, 2020). The development of critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and communication skills is emphasized in NEP 2020. It will help students become more employable and better equipped to succeed in a rapidly changing world (Biswas, 2023). NEP 2020 also emphasis to develop a multicultural classroom in school on language skill, vocational skill, practical knowledge skill, social skill, thinking skill etc.

- **Preparation for Technology in Education**: NEP 2020 emphasizes the use of technology in education to prepare young students for the future and increasing multicultural classrooms in schools (Marvi, 2023). By fostering an appreciation for cultural diversity, NEP 2020 equips students with the skills necessary for navigating a globalized world. The policy recognizes the value of technology in education and encourages the use of digital tools and resources in teaching and learning processes, it emphasizes the development of digital content, e-learning platforms, and digital infrastructure to enhance educational accessibility and quality (Parveen & Ramzan, 2024).

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a significant step towards promoting cultural diversity in India's classrooms. It emphasizes curriculum reform, multilingual education, holistic development, flexible assessment practices, skill development and technology integration. The policy aims to create an inclusive and dynamic learning environment that celebrates cultural diversity. It emphasizes multilingualism, ensuring that students learn in their mother tongue or regional language while participating in intercultural initiatives. The policy encourages holistic development through experiential learning and inclusive education. It shifts the focus from summative to formative assessment, promoting a more inclusive approach to assessment. The policy also emphasizes the importance of technology in education, making digital tools accessible to all students.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the inclusive approach of NEP 2020 in education creates a more inclusive learning environment, which promotes understanding of cultural diversity. The integration of principles from other cultural perspectives improves empathy and respect for others, as well as students' understanding of their own identity. It promoting social cohesion and national unity while respecting the rich fabric of India's various cultural past, this all-encompassing educational framework equips students to navigate an increasingly interconnected world. If NEP 2020 is successfully implemented, classroom experiences can be vastly improved and children will be given the values and abilities they need to succeed in a diverse society.

REFERENCES

Anu, D. B., Lei, L., Cisterna, D., & Song, Y. (2023). Cultural validity: Promoting cultural responsiveness in classroom assessment. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, *18*(3), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2023.2193883

Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (2016). *Multicultural education: issues and perspectives* (9th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. https://www.daneshnamehicsa.ir/userfiles/files/1/16-%20Multicultural%20Education_%20Issues%20and%20Perspectives%20(2016,%20Wiley).pdf

Boddington, E. N. (2008b). Cultural diversity and the changing culture of education. In *Eric* (p. 10). https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED503207

Biswas, S. (2023). Opportunities and Challenges NEP- 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/370683834_OPPORTUNITIES_AND_CHALLENGES_NEP-2020

Chauhan, A., & Singh, K. (2023). An overview of India's national education policy, 2020: Key features and the way forward. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, *11*(9), 663–673. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373841542_An_Overview_of_India's_National_Education_Policy_2020_Key_Features_and_the_Way_Forward

Chouari, A. (2016). Cultural diversity and the challenges of teaching multicultural classes in the twenty-first century. *Arab World English Journal*, *7*(3), 3–17. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol7no3.1

Eden, C. A., Chisom, N., & Idowu, N. (2024). Cultural competence in education: strategies for fostering inclusivity and diversity awareness. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences*, *6*(3), 383–392. https://doi.org/10.51594/ijarss.v6i3.895

Den Brok, P., & Levy, J. (2005). Teacher–student relationships in multicultural classes: Reviewing the past, preparing the future. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *43*(1-2), 72–88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2006.03.007

Den Brok, P., Levy, J., Wubbels, T., & Rodriguez, M. (2003). Cultural influences on students' perceptions of videotaped lessons. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *27*(3), 355–378. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00016-6

Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *43*(1), 48–70. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12002

Kaur, M. K. (2024). Challenges in implementation of NEP-2020. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *12*(1), 2349–3429. https://doi.org/10.25215/1201.161

Kuteesa, K. N., Akpuokwe, C. U., & Udeh, C. A. (2024). Gender equity in education: addressing challenges and promoting opportunities for social empowerment. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences*, *6*(4), 631–641. https://doi.org/10.51594/ijarss.v6i4.1034

Lin, C. (2020). Understanding cultural diversity and diverse identities. *Encyclopaedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*, *1*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69902-8_37-1

Mandal, A.A. (2023). A Critical Analysis of the National Education Policy 2020: Implications and challenges. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews, 4*(7), 1971-1978. https://ijrpr.com/uploads/V4ISSUE7/IJRPR15493.pdf

Mandal, R. & Mete, J. (2023), Role of NEP-2020 in multilingual education: A study, *Journal of Educational Research*, *3*(1), 48-53. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373420802_Role_of_NEP_2020_in_Multilingual_Education_A_Study

Mandal, R., Khatun, N., & Mete, J. (2024). Cultural and lingual diversity of north east India. *Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, *9*(4), 70–78. https://doi.org/10.31305/rrijm.2024.v09.n04.009

Marne, G. S., & Deshmukh, N. (2022). National education policy-2020: Issues and challenges. *Journal of the Oriental Institute*. https://msmcone.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/AddDeptRes/4_5.Marane-Deshmukh-Paper.pdf

Marvi, K. (2023). Impact of Cultural Diversity in Classrooms of Secondary Schools. Creative Education, 14, 197-211. https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2023.141014

Nagpal, P. (2023). Implementing the National Education Policy 2020: Challenges and Solutions in School Education in India. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts, 11*(1), 828-831. https://www.ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2301593.pdf

National education policy 2020 (pp. 53–56). (2020). Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

Pandey, P. (2024). Multicultural classroom: Challenges and opportunities for teachers. In D. A. Ode & A. Tamang (Eds.), *Population Dynamics: Navigating the Educational Landscape* (pp. 8–15). Infinity Publication. https://blgm.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/eBook-of-Population.pdf#page=23

Parveen, D. S., & Ramzan, S. I. (2024). The role of digital technologies in education: Benefits and challenges. *International Research Journal on Advanced Engineering and Management*, 2(06), 2029–2037. https://doi.org/10.47392/IRJAEM.2024.0299

Pawar, A., Phulari, S., Bane, P., & Dsouza, A. (2022). Study on Issues, Approaches Challenges and Review of NEP 2020. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology, 2*(5), 2581-9429. https://ijarsct.co.in/A3571.pdf

Ralhan, B. D. (2020). Challenges In Implementing the National Education Policy 2020. *Entrepreneur; Entrepreneur Media India*. https://www.entrepreneur.com/en-in/news-and-trends/challenges-in-implementing-the-national-education-policy/357910

Reddy, P.N. (2020). National Education Policy 2020 - Challenges and Opportunities on the Educational System. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 2319-7064. https://doi.org10.21275/SR211115122335.927-930.

Renu, & Chowdhury, D. (2024). Role of national education policy 2020 in reshaping the Indian school education system. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, *12*(1), 141–145. https://ijcrt.org/papers/IJCRT2401493.pdf

Salama, H., Elmannai, W., & Bach, C. (2014). *Multiculturalism*. 199–207. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264897915_Multiculturalism

Saxena, M.K., & Kanwar, A. (2021). National Education Policy–2020: Issues and Challenges in Implementation. *University News*, 59 (15), 12-18, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351839230

Schwarzenthal, M., Schachner, M. K., Juang, L. P., & Vijver, F. J. R. V. D. (2020). Reaping the benefits of cultural diversity: Classroom cultural diversity climate and students' intercultural competence. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *50*(2), 323–346. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2617

Sharma, J. K. (2020). National education policy 2020: Language perspective. *International Journal of Management Research and Social Science*, *8*(1), 7–15. https://doi.org/10.30726/ijmrss/v8.i1.2021.81003

Soni, R. (2022). Challenges and Issues in National Education Policy 2020. *International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science, 4* (3). 2026-2031.
https://www.irjmets.com/uploadedfiles/paper/issue_3_march_2022/20274/final/fin_irjmets1648488303.pdf

Tartwijk, J. V., den Brok, P., Veldman, I., & Wubbels, T. (2009). Teachers' practical knowledge about classroom management in multicultural classrooms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*(3), 453–460. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.09.005

Venkateshwarlu, B. (2021). A Critical Study of Nep 2020: Issues, Approaches, Challenges, Oppertunities and Criticism. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research, 10*(2). 191-196. http://s3-ap-southeast-1.amazonaws.com/ijmer/pdf/volume10/volume10-issue2(5)/33.pdf

Yadav, S. (2022). Challenges in Teacher Education in the context of NEP, Higher Education and teacher skills for NEP 2020. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research, 9*(10), a764-a770. https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2210102.pdf

Conflict of Interest
The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Milan, B., Tupai, B., Sudeshna, M., Arabinda, B., Ankur, N., Tapash, D. & Tarini, H. (2025). Cultural Diversity in the School Classroom: The Transformative Role of NEP 2020. *International Journal of Social Impact*, *10*(1), 052-060. DIP: 18.02.004/ 20251001, DOI: 10.25215/2455/1001004