

Multicultural Education: Addressing Diversity in the Classroom

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Abstract

In order to integrate local languages into early learning stages while preserving rich cultural and traditional values, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) has outlined a multitude of recommendations for the promotion as well as preservation of Indian languages. To achieve this, the paper emphasises the NEP-2020 objectives, which are intended to enhance understanding of the organization's contribution to the promotion of Indian languages and multicultural education. Multicultural education is both a concept and a reform movement. Its primary objective is to alter the framework of educational establishments in order to provide equitable academic opportunities for all students, including those who are exceptional, male, female, of different racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, and those who are exceptional.

Keywords: Multicultural education, NEP 2020, Methods, Multidisciplinary Approaches

1 Introduction

Multiculturalism is diversity of culture. The objective of multiculturalism is to ensure that all cultures are accorded constitutional equality and respect. It is unacceptable for any one culture to gain cultural dominance over others in a country to the detriment of another. The ideology of a nation's educated class determines the future of that nation; therefore, education system of that nation influences that nation's culture. As education serves as a vehicle for the development, maintenance, and transmission of culture, it is crucial to incorporate multiculturalism into the curriculum of a secular nation such as India, which has embraced secularism and multiculturalism. India is characterised by its diverse religious, linguistic,

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cultural, and societal values. Culture in India has been shaped by adherents of numerous faiths. As the distance between nations and their inhabitants has shrunk, the world has evolved into a global village. The Constitution of India's status as a fundamental cultural document is inconsequential. (Dasharath Dunghav, 2021)

Definitions of multiculturalism

“Successful multiculturalism builds the bonds of community that lead to interracial, interethnic friendships.”

— **Diane Ravitch**

“Multiculturalism is a term that has come to serve as shorthand for a host of different and not necessarily related cultural and educational issues. Arguments relating to gender studies, ethnic and racial studies, affirmative action, freedom of speech on campus, compromise and corruption among educational administrators have all been aired under the title, multiculturalism.”

— **A. E. Barnes**

Objectives of Multidisciplinary Approach:

1. To incorporate STEM into the arts stream.
2. In order to integrate the disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics with the humanities, language, arts, drama, dance, and music.
3. To augment the overall pleasure and welfare of students.
4. In order to enhance the problem-solving abilities of students.
5. To foster the development of critical reasoning in students.
6. To foster the development of virtues such as tenacity, accountability, and civic engagement, which will ultimately bring about their lifelong prosperity.
7. To cultivate comprehension for the logical application of science and technology.
8. Encourage students to develop a sense of moral and ethical responsibility grounded in their personal values.
9. In order to empower the students to apply the principles of equity, wisdom, and constructiveness to their individual actions.
10. To expand the learner's visual horizons, thus encouraging inquisitiveness and discourse.
11. Instructing the students on how to coexist harmoniously, responsibly, and creatively in society.
12. Inspire the students to assume the role of catalysts for societal improvement.

Importance of Multiculturalism in Education

Identifications of the culture: Multicultural education not just facilitates students' acquaintance with diverse cultures but also fosters within them a disposition characterized by compassion and understanding towards the cultures of others, as well as reverence for cultures other than their own.

To create cultural Integration: Cultural integration between pupils can be achieved via the implementation of multicultural education. Additionally, cultural integration benefits the integrity of the entire nation. The Advantages and Consequences of Cultural Integration and Why It's Crucial to Society Multicultural education facilitates the acquisition of knowledge in this regard, promotes cultural integration, and assists in the development of a sense of connection to various cultures within society.

To develop responsible citizenship: Proficient and accountable populace constitute the nation's capital. Societal progress is a prerequisite for the advancement of any nation. Under such circumstances, the development of responsible citizenship via multicultural education occurs at an accelerated rate. Multicultural education is therefore critical for the development of competent citizens.

To create broad positive social approaches: Urgently required is multicultural education in order to foster a positive, all-encompassing social outlook. Multicultural education is critical to the formation of conscientious citizens via the medium of education. Social development is contingent upon the cultivation of social consciousness; therefore, multicultural education has the potential to instill students with an all-encompassing positive social outlook. It does, in fact, require effort.

1.1 Types of Diversity

1. Cultural Diversity

Culture is a significant contributor to diversity. Culture is an all-encompassing notion that encompasses various aspects such as worldviews, perspectives, values, ethnicity, behavioural patterns, dialects and languages, verbal and non-verbal communication techniques, and communication patterns."Cultures have shared beliefs, values, practices, definitions, and various other elements which are expressed through family socialisation, formal schooling, shared language, social roles, and standards for feeling, thinking, and acting".

As culture is a dynamic and ever-evolving concept, it is impossible to provide a singular definition. Cultural diversity is therefore the explanation for instances in which a learner's ethnicity, social class, or language deviate from the dominant culture. A rich cultural heritage endows each region in our nation with a distinct identity that is quite distinct from that of other regions or states. Traditions, observances, clothing, celebrations, and more vary by region while contributing to the formation of that region's distinct identity. A Sardar donning a turban, a Rajastani donning a Pagdi, or a Kashmiri donning a Pheran is not an uncommon sight.

2. Race

Race generally alludes to individuals who share a common ancestry. For instance, the Aryan race and the Dravidian race are discussed. The term "race" is frequently applied to physical or biological characteristics, including but not limited to facial features, hair colour, and texture. However, empirical evidence suggests that genetic variation is present exclusively within ethnic groups and not between them. Consequently, disparities among races in domains such as intelligence or academia are not attributable to biological variations, but rather to socioeconomic, historical, and historical influences. The conceptualizations and consequences of race have evolved throughout history, in response to the impact of prevalent legislation and policies. Racist prejudice continues to be a significant global hazard. Consistently growing demonstrations and unrest on a global scale serve as evidence of the pervasiveness of prejudice against people of colour.

3. Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a social construct that pertains to an individual's heritage, ancestry, or association with a particular cultural collective (Pinderhughes, 1989). It is a fallacy to conflate ethnicity and nationality interchangeably. In contrast to nationality, which pertains to an individual's status as a citizen or born member of a particular nation (e.g., a person residing in the United States who was born in India retains Indian nationality due to birthplace), ethnicity encompasses elements of personal culture, including linguistic practices, customs, and social connections. In the same way that race presupposes the existence of common biological or inherited characteristics, ethnicity carries implications of shared cultural characteristics.

4. Gender

How individuals are categorised as male or female and the societal expectations and definitions of those terms constitute gender as a social construct. A tendency exists to conflate gender and biology. Strictly as opposed to being a social construct, gender is a biological descriptor established through the examination of internal and external reproductive organs and chromosomes. Gender is primarily influenced by the societal perspective that individuals hold regarding their own sex.

5. Social Class

It is a prevalent phenomenon in our society that individuals from higher socioeconomic classes are more likely to gain admission to prestigious educational institutions and institutes compared to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Due to their higher revenues and affiliation with affluent families, they are able to avail themselves of more substantial educational benefits, including private instruction and coaching.

This is owing to the diversification of social classes. Social class comprises an individual's educational attainment, occupational standing, income or just material wealth, and is a social construct. It can be delineated by the degree of social standing that its constituents possess in comparison to individuals belonging to alternative social classes. An individual is categorised into a stratified hierarchy according

to their social network, wealth, income, education, and occupation. Additionally, it can affect how members of that class feel, behave, and blend in. The progressive widening of the social class divide has been a growing factor in the diversity of our society.

6. Disability

Disabilities are conditions, whether apparent or concealed, transient or permanent, that impede or confront individuals across all age groups and social strata. Disability encompasses a wide range of classifications, including physical, intellectual, mental, and sensory impairments. The term "it" is an umbrella that encompasses limitations on activity, participation, and impairment. A problem with the structure or function of the body constitutes an impairment; sensory impairments include visual and auditory impairments. For instance, a child who has a hearing impairment will be incapable of perceiving sounds. Similarly, activity limitation refers to a situation in which a child encounters challenges in performing a particular task or action. A child who has contracted polio may encounter challenges in ambulation and running compared to their peers. Conversely, a participation restriction pertains to an obstacle an individual faces when attempting to engage in various aspects of life, including employment, social interactions, and recreational pursuits.

1.2 Strategies for Addressing Diversity in Classroom

The intricate nature of managing such disparate and heterogeneous classrooms presents a formidable obstacle for educators. Rather than merely recognising and/or accepting variations, it is critical to establish constructive educational settings and pedagogical approaches that facilitate the optimal development of every student.

Strategies for addressing diversity in the classroom include:

1. Recognizing the increasing Diversity of classrooms

It is necessary to acknowledge the altering social composition of students in the classroom as a consequence of the growing diversity within the student body. Furthermore, it necessitates the redesign of instructional materials, assessment methods, curricula, and teaching-learning processes and procedures in order to accommodate the varying learning requirements of children hailing from diverse backgrounds.

2. Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction pertains to strategies in which distinct students are offered individualised learning paths, catering to their individual needs in terms of acquiring knowledge, developing skills, digesting information, or comprehending concepts. It entails determining the perceptual strengths of each pupil and adapting instruction accordingly. Disseminated instruction has a direct influence on cognitive abilities, social skills, and positive work habits, among others. Students will experience increased engagement and interest in the subject matter if instruction is tailored to their individual strengths and interests. By implementing this strategy, instructors optimise the learning experience for every student

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in classroom by proactively adjusting the curriculum, instructional approaches, materials, assignments, and assessments to suit the unique requirements of specific pupils and small cohorts.

3. Interactive pedagogy

In lieu of a transmission mode, pedagogy ought to adopt a participatory mode that is more affirming. This would afford an opportunity for the instructor and the pupils to engage in conversation. Teachers can also assist pupils in perceiving learning assignments as purposeful. Teachers may, rather than regarding pupils as "others," forge a connection with them.

4. Scaffolding

Through the utilisation of "scaffolding," educators are able to connect cultural resources that students bring to the classroom with the academically rigorous curriculum. By scaffolding, the instructor divides the material or subject matter into manageable portions or compact units and accompanies each portion with a resource or framework.

5. Cooperative collaborative learning

Collaborative cooperative learning is an extremely well-liked and economical method. Promoting interdependence and collaboration among students while emphasising the significance of individual accountability is the underlying concept. It appears that these practices positively impact student learning. The widely adopted project-based learning approach in higher education institutions is founded upon the cooperative learning principle. Cooperative learning strategies afford learners crucial opportunities for purposeful, engaging, and meaningful interaction. Teamwork can assist pupils in developing their self-esteem. Additionally, it aids in the development of both academic and non-academic abilities.

6. Holistic approach

Considering the domains of cognition, emotion, and movement, integrated holistic approaches might be preferred over memorization and tedious practice in order to make learning more engaging and beneficial.

7. Teacher Capacity Building

Trainers and educators are influential agents of change in the fight for classroom equity. They must possess the requisite knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and values to accomplish this. Additionally, they must operate under the necessary influence of motivation and dedication.

1.3 Multicultural Curriculum Teaching Methods

1. Project method

The project method proves to be highly advantageous in ensuring the effective execution of multicultural curriculum. Students' multiculturalism can potentially be fostered via the implementation of the project method. Information gathering on a variety of cultural aspects, social issues, and environmental concerns

are just a few of the initiatives that can be initiated. Students can complete countless assignments of this nature in this manner.

2. Problem solving method

In an environment rife with bad practices and traditions, the instructor should assign problem-solving projects to students with the objective of identifying the correct resolution amidst the myriad of such practices, traditions, and bad practices that exist in every culture. As an illustration, the Honda method proposes viable resolutions to the issue at hand, namely identify the underlying factors contributing to water scarcity and propose a solution strategy. Thus, the approach to problem-solving can be effectively implemented.

3. Seminar method

Seminar-based instruction permits the facilitation of in-depth discussions on a wide range of sociocultural issues. Seminars on a variety of cultural characteristics and diversity can be conducted using this method of instruction. This contributes to the development of a sense of community among pupils of various cultures. Seminar instruction is highly effective within multicultural education due to its emphasis on group discussion and expert opinion on social issues.

4. Debating method

Students have the opportunity to engage in debates concerning a wide range of cultural matters, with the aim of fostering cultural tolerance and facilitating cultural integration. The teaching methodology effectively imparts cultural knowledge, fosters cultural proficiency, and promotes cultural brotherhood among the students.

1.4 Pitfalls in Multicultural Education

1. Lack of multicultural teaching strategies

In order to foster a multicultural mindset among students, instructors must implement a multicultural teaching strategy; however, the multicultural education work policy is not consistently adhered to by the majority of educators. Although the implementation of holistic teaching methods by educators can pique students' interest in learning, it seems that the majority of instructors are not doing so. This lack of implementation hinders the development of a multicultural approach among the students.

2. Lack of cultural awareness

The absence of cultural cognizance among pupils presents numerous challenges in fostering mutual cultural tolerance. Culture cannot be preserved, nurtured, or transmitted in the absence of cultural consciousness. The cultivation of a multicultural ideology among students and society at large has become a formidable task owing to the prevalent dearth of multicultural consciousness.

3. Cultural conflicts

A cultural dispute is an established dispute. Cultural conflict engenders animosity towards one another's respective cultures. Concurrently, it strives for minority culture dominance over majority culture. As a consequence, cultural conflict has presented cultural education and multicultural curricula with an enormous obstacle.

4. Prejudiced attitude

Prejudicial thinking engenders adverse attitudes among distinct groups, thereby giving rise to cultural disparities. This phenomenon fosters cultural and social tensions, disrupts social harmony, and exacerbates feelings of superiority. As a result, prejudiced attitudes constitute a significant barrier to multicultural education.

2 Literature Review

(Lomotey, 2012) Culture-based education is an instructional and learning methodology that organises the learning process around the learner's cultural environment, taking into consideration the prevailing social values, norms, beliefs, and practices. Determining the various facets of culture-based education is the objective of this conceptual paper. As a means of fostering academic achievement and bolstering student engagement, culture-based education has had a profound impact on students, shaping their identities and improving their spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional well-being. This article examines the conceptual components and advantages of culture-based education. This paper additionally investigates the educator's responsibility in advancing culture-based education as well as the prevalent practices in India pertaining to culturally-based education.

(Parker, 2019) In this paper, we'll look at how Multicultural Education may be a useful framework for higher education classrooms. Across all academic disciplines, English Language Learners within the United States are the primary focus. An examination of the five facets of "Critical Multicultural Education" is provided, accompanied by additional commentary on crucial areas of emphasis that should facilitate a more comprehensive comprehension of the course material and among native-born and English Language Learners students.

(Sharma, 2020) The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an endeavour to revolutionise the educational landscape of India by reorienting the teaching and learning process to prioritise the acquisition of skills, critical thinking, and holistic development. This extensive research examines the diverse effects of NEP 2020 across multiple facets of education. By employing a mixed-methods strategy that includes an examination of academic research, literature reviews, surveys, case studies, as well as pedagogical approaches, this study investigates modifications in curriculum development, assessment procedures, and the educational experience as a whole.

(Borah & Debnath, 2021) In addition to providing education facilities, individuals are expected to abstain from any form of discrimination predicated on gender or sex. Education for all must be our fundamental obligation as a developing nation. We shall not succeed as a developing nation if our education system

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continues to be inaccessible to every citizen in every region. Presently, inclusive education is a necessity rather than a benefit. As a developing nation, education is of the utmost importance for India's development. The recommendations pertaining to comprehensive education, as outlined in the National Education Policy 2020, have been examined in this chapter of the book. The Union Cabinet of India approved National Education Policy 2020 on July 29, 2020. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) supersedes the National Policy on Education, which was established in 1986.

(DasharathDunghav, 2021) Multiculturalism is diversity of culture. The objective of multiculturalism is to ensure that all cultures are accorded constitutional equality and respect. It is unacceptable for any one culture to gain cultural dominance over others in a country to the detriment of another. The ideology of a nation's educated class determines the future of that nation; therefore, education system of that nation influences that nation's culture. As education serves as a vehicle for the development, maintenance, and transmission of culture, it is crucial to incorporate multiculturalism into the curriculum of a secular nation such as India, which has embraced secularism and multiculturalism. India is characterised by its diverse religious, linguistic, cultural, and societal values.

(Environment & Classroom, 2021) Given the dynamic nature of the global landscape, it is crucial to provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop into the citizens of future. The acceptance and understanding of diverse cultures are fundamental requirements for individuals. A cultural programme comprises knowledge, concepts, and values that are collectively communicated by the members of a group. Additionally, culture comprises shared beliefs, symbols, and interpretations that occur within a human group. Multi-cultural education is both an ideology and a reform movement, with the primary objective of reorganising educational institutions to ensure that all students, including those who are exceptional, male and female, of diverse rational, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, have an equitable opportunity to succeed academically.

(Nagpal, 2023) India has recently implemented the "National Education Policy 2020" (NEP 2020) in an effort to reform the education system and promote a holistic, multidisciplinary, and inclusive learning environment. The NEP 2020 is an all-encompassing policy document that examines every aspect of education, including postsecondary education and care for young children. A lack of qualified educators, outdated facilities, insufficient financing, and opposition to change are only a few of the obstacles that have slowed down the NEP 2020's implementation in school instruction, despite its admirable intentions. The objective of this scholarly article is to examine the obstacles and possible remedies associated with the implementation of NEP 2020 in Indian schools. The paper emphasises, among other things, the significance of adequate funding, effective stakeholder engagement, and teacher capacity development by conducting a review of the relevant literature.

(A. A. Mandal, 2023) A landmark document, "National Education Policy" (NEP) 2020 delineates the overarching vision and trajectory of education in India for the foreseeable future. This scholarly article conducts a critical analysis of the NEP 2020, identifying the obstacles that must be surmounted to ensure its successful execution and assessing its ramifications. The paper evaluates the prospective impact of the NEP 2020's main provisions, which include modifications to curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, as

well as governance, on the education system. Moreover, the paper examines the potential benefits and obstacles that may arise from the policy's focus on comprehensive and interdisciplinary learning, technological advancements, and inclusiveness. The results of this study make a significant contribution to the ongoing scholarly conversation regarding educational reforms by offering policymakers, educators, as well as stakeholders engaged in the NEP 2020 implementation process valuable insights.

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(Abrol, 2023) Education is the foundation of all nations' advancement. A progressive education policy, which is not only well-defined but also meticulously planned, is an absolute necessity for the advancement of every nation. With diverse cultural and traditional backgrounds in mind, numerous nations have implemented unique educational systems. The Union Cabinet System granted approval to National Education Policy (NEP) on July 28, 2020. After 34 years, the Indian government received feedback from over 50 seminars and 2.5 lakh village-level stakeholders represented on two national parliamentary committees.

(Acharya, 2023) Education, and specifically school education, is of paramount importance in fostering a child's cognitive and holistic development. The language utilised as an instructional medium serves as a tool for the comprehensive growth and development of child. Due to multilingual nature of Indian society, it is challenging to select a specific language for this reason in the context of India. Multilingualism constitutes a significant facet of our multicultural society. The nation is home to hundreds of languages, 22 of which are constitutionally recognised. The K Kasturirangan Committee's National Education Policy of India 2020 appears to have given careful and practical consideration to these matters, as it introduces innovative concepts pertaining to language instruction.

(R. Mandal & Mete, 2023) Language constitutes an exclusively human capability. It functions as a conduit via which we acquire education and knowledge. It assists us in communicating our thoughts and opinions to others. Additionally, language contributes to the preservation of Indian culture and tradition, since people have transmitted their values as well as rituals orally and in writing since antiquity. India, being a multicultural nation, is home to a vast array of individuals who speak various languages and dialects. In addition, the 8th Schedule of Constitution designated 22 languages as official Indian languages. A multitude of suggestions were outlined in NEP-2020 with regard to the advancement and conservation of Indian languages.

(Islam & Ghosh, 2024) This research investigates the fundamental tenets, approaches to execution, obstacles, and prospects associated with inclusive education, focusing specifically on observations made from India's National Education Policy 2020. NEP-2020's reforming the educational agenda is predicated on inclusive education, which is founded upon the basic premise of ensuring that all individuals, irrespective of their origin or abilities, have equitable access to high-quality education. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the position taken by NEP-2020 regarding inclusive education, detailing its fundamental principles, policy structures, and approaches to execution. By utilising theoretical frameworks, empirical research, policy documents, and scholastic articles as sources, this article evaluates the various complex aspects of inclusive education and its importance in promoting a learning environment that is fair, empowering, and equitable.

(Srivastava et al., 2024) Despite its transformative nature, National Education Policy (2020) has endeavoured to restructure the education system of our nation by addressing all facets of teaching and learning at every level. The strategy has proposed a number of steps to encourage a multilingual approach to education, in which students study not just foreign languages but also their mother tongue or a local/home/regional language alongside their academic studies. "National Education Policy" 2020 (NEP-2020) has outlined a multitude of suggestions for the advancement and safeguarding of Indian languages, with the dual objective of integrating indigenous languages into early learning stages and preserving the nation's cultural and traditional heritage.

3 Conclusion

A multicultural curriculum is essential in a secular nation such as India to promote cultural harmony, benevolence, preservation, development, and transition. This paper explores how multidisciplinary education within the framework of NEP enables students to improve their language proficiency, mother tongue utilisation, and classroom diversity by integrating the expertise of one discipline with that of other fields. By adopting this methodology, not only does it enrich the academic journey for every pupil, but it also equips them with the necessary skills to act as considerate, culturally aware, and respectful global citizens in the era of greater interconnectivity.

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