



## Integrating Cultural Heritage and Modern Learning Practices Under Nep 2020

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### ARTICLE DETAILS

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### ABSTRACT

As per NEP 2020, holistic education is the integration of India's ancient culture with the modern, cutting-edge educational methods. This descriptive-survey study explores: (a) Understanding the cultural heritage (CH), (b) modern learning practice exposure (MLP), (c) perceived holistic education implementation (HEI), and (d) all combined impact on academic performance (AP) of 270 senior-secondary students from five districts in West Bengal. A multi-stage stratified random sample, representing 60% government and 40% private school students, grades 9 to 12 (47% male) was administered four reliable Likert scales ( $\alpha \geq 0.82$ ). We also applied Pearson correlations, descriptive statistics, t-tests, and ANOVA. Students reported moderate to satisfactory levels of cultural heritage (CH) education ( $M=3.33\pm 0.78$ ). Modern learning practices (MLP) also achieved moderate levels ( $M=3.21\pm 0.74$ ) but HEI fell short ( $M=2.34\pm 0.62$ ). CH was a moderate predictor of AP ( $r=0.495, p<.001$ ) and MLP ( $r=-0.004, ns$ ); MLP had a stronger relationship with AP ( $r=0.576, p<.001$ ). HEI had the strongest relationship to AP ( $r=0.680, p<.001$ ) and was a partial mediator in the relationship of CH and MLP with HEI. Mean GPAs improved from 1.85 (Low CH) to 2.53 (High



CH), and 1.92 (Low MLP) to 2.62 (High MLP). No significant differences by gender or school type were present for GPA. Findings support the assumption of NEP 2020 that an integration of modernity with heritage can yield better outcomes, though there is an uneven application of the policy along with a need for teacher training. We present policy, teaching, and scholarly actionable recommendations.

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## 1. Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 attempts to develop an individual who is deeply rooted in Indian culture and can also resolve contemporary issues of the 21st century using technology-enabled, value-based, and holistic multidisciplinary education (Shukla et al, 2022). Shukla et al. (2022) states that the NEP 2020 policy attempts to move away from the rigid, examination-based to more flexible and holistic interdisciplinary crossover curriculum which incorporates arts, science, humanities, and even vocational disciplines that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and adaptability (International Journal of Indian Psychology, 2024). This multidisciplinary approach is designed to be applied using the 5+3+3+4 model, which aims to enhance the focus on relaxation and self-directed, inquiry-based learning during, and reduce stress in high-pressure situations (BHU, 2020). Curriculum centered on ethics, empathy, social responsibility, and social A core of NEP 2020. The policy attempts to fortify and cultivate mental and moral fortitude alongside intellectual rigor, leveraging the ancient Indian system of education as a framework (Isser et al., 2024). The policy also attempts to incorporate IKS – Indian Knowledge Systems into contemporary education to foster a sense of identity and pride while preparing them as global citizens (BHU, 2020).

Technology is important for the New Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 due to creation of digital infrastructures like DIKSHA and SWAYAM which bridge the quality resource gaps between urban and rural areas (Extramarks, 2025; NagaEd, 2020). NETF, National Educational Technology Forum NETF, supervises the moral and social aspects of new age technologies, guarding educational technology to reduce the dehumanizing impact to teaching and learning (JETIR, 2024). Integration of 21st century techniques and technologies into teaching while blending with traditional teaching methods is still limited to the physical classroom, along with gaps in research on how these components interrelate with learner motivation, holistic development, and academic performance (IJERT, 2025). To fulfill the objectives of NEP 2020, and to realize the vision NEP 2020 set, multi-dimensional and context-specific research is



necessary that transforms the design of teacher education, innovation practice, and policy in the socio-culturally diverse educational landscape of India.

## 2. Review of Literature

The NEP 2020 aims at integrating India's heritage into education to deepen identity and ethics, foster critical thinking, and inspire pride in indigenous knowledge systems. NEP 2020 also encourages modern and engaging experiential, technology-driven, and competency-based learning to enhance flexibility and skill acquisition. Additionally, the policy supports progressive holistic report cards and 360° formative, multi-dimensional evaluation to assess students' academic, social, and emotional development for continuous self-improvement. However, there is still a lack of empirical evidence on the relationships and the interplay of cultural heritage, modern practices, and holistic assessment, and how these affect student achievement in real classroom contexts. Systematic research to address this evidence gap is crucial in the context of efficiently and equitably applying NEP 2020.

## 3. Need of the Study

The socio-economic conditions, culture, and language in West Bengal make it an ideal region for examining the interaction between culture and education with regard to the National Education Policy 2020. The combination of government and private schools, as well as urban and semi-urban populations, presents a rich array of resources for studying diverse responses to the NEP guidelines. This research addresses a critical gap in policy research: moving beyond theoretical scopes to context-driven, action-oriented, and evidence-based frameworks. These findings assist in NEP implementation refinements—addressing gaps and identifying policy strengths, shifting visions toward more integrative frameworks, and ensuring equity in policy impacts. The policy intends to enhance the educational experiences and outcomes of all learners, regardless of their background and the type of institution they attend. This research aims to evaluate the feasibility and impacts of NEP 2020 within a pluralistic context, thereby testing the policy and providing a blueprint for evidence-based educational reform for the rest of the country.

## 4. Objectives

- O<sub>1</sub> Assess students' CH awareness, MLP exposure, HEI perception and AP.
- O<sub>2</sub> Examine inter-correlations among CH, MLP, HEI and AP.
- O<sub>3</sub> Test mean differences in AP across CH, MLP and HEI levels.
- O<sub>4</sub> Identify implementation gaps and propose actionable recommendations.

## 5. Null Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant correlation between CH and AP.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant correlation between MLP and AP.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the mediation effects of HEI on the relationship between CH and MLP with AP.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant difference in AP based on CH, MLP, or HEI levels.

## 6. Delimitations

This research focuses on the students in class 9 to 12 in the state of West Bengal and employs self-report measures for cultural heritage awareness and holistic education. The cross-sectional design captures data in a single instance, which in this case, it is possible to identify associations among the constructs but it is not possible to determine causal relationships.

## 7. Research Design

A **descriptive-survey** method with quantitative analysis was adopted.

## 8. Sample (N = 270)

Multistage stratified sampling ensured representation across district, school type and class (Table 1).

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by School Type**

School Type	n (%)
Government	164 (60.7)
Private	106 (39.3)

**Table 1(a): Distribution of Respondents by Class**

Class	n
9	78
10	71
11	62
12	59

**Table 1(b): Distribution of Respondents by Gender**

Gender	n (%)
Female	142 (52.6)
Male	128 (47.4)

## 9. Sampling Procedure

The research used multistage sampling techniques to choose 270 students from West Bengal. To achieve geographic diversity, 10 schools were randomly selected from every district. Then, within each school, class lists of students from grades 9 to 12 were compiled and each class's list was compiled in a way that mirrored the overall student population of the school. Finally, students were randomly selected from the compiled lists until 270 students were obtained. Although this method combined different forms of sampling, it still provided a mix of randomness and representation across districts, types of schools, and grades which improved the overall rigor of the study.

## 10. Tools & Techniques

Four validated instruments were used to assess the scope of the research: the Cultural Heritage Awareness Scale (20 items,  $\alpha = 0.87$ ), Modern Learning Practices Inventory (18 items,  $\alpha = 0.82$ ), Holistic Education Implementation Index (15 items,  $\alpha = 0.85$ ), and GPA from the previous term, which was retrieved from the school records as a measure of academic performance ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ). Quantitative data were captured and analyzed through the use of SPSS-27 where trend analysis and summarization were performed, correlation analysis through Pearson's, group comparisons were tested through t-tests and ANOVA, and indirect effects were tested through mediation analysis. This methodological framework provided an unbiased and thorough analysis of the NEP 2020's vision for integration as formulated in the West Bengal's classrooms.

## 11. Analysis of Data & Interpretation

### 11.1 Descriptive Results

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Results**

Variable	Mean
CH	3.33

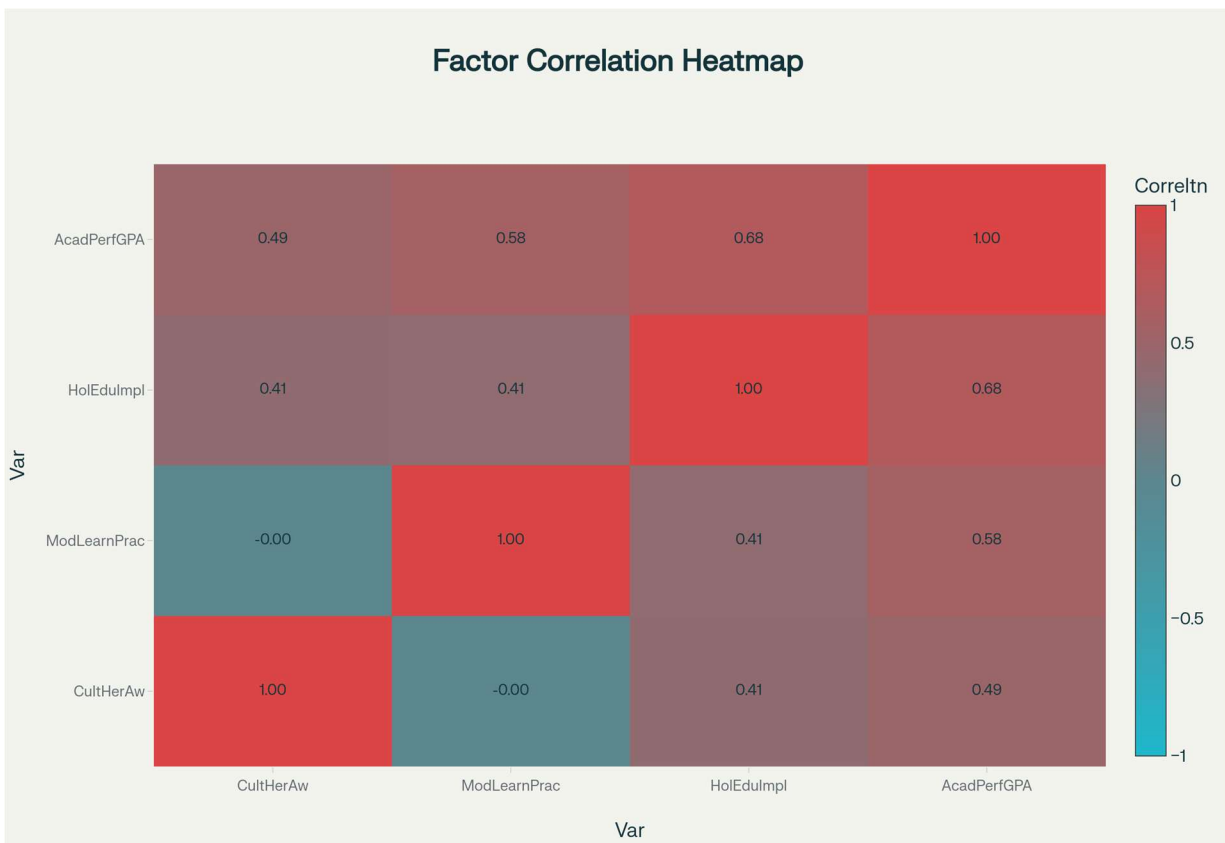


MLP	3.21
HEI	2.34
GPA	2.34

Table 2 shows results for participants’ mean scores in the study. Their mean scores demonstrate a moderate level of awareness of cultural heritage (CH: M = 3.33) and exposure to modern learning (MLP: M = 3.21) measured on a Likert-type scale. Participants’ perceptions of holistic education implementation (HEI: M = 2.34) stood out as particularly low relative to other measures, suggesting students understand cultural values and modern pedagogy, but there is a large gap in the actual integration of holistic education approaches as advocated in the NEP 2020. Their mean academic performance, measured by GPA (M = 2.34), reinforces these implementation suspicions and suggesting a possible link between the effectiveness of delivering holistic education and students’ academic performance that could be tested with correlation and regression analyses.

### 11.2 Correlation Matrix

Heat-map shows strongest link between HEI and GPA ( $r = 0.680^{**}$ ).



### Figure 1: Factor Correlation Heatmap

Based on the statistics, there is a significant positive correlation between the implementation of holistic education (HEI) and a student's academic performance as measured by their Grade Point Average (GPA) ( $r = 0.68, p < .001$ ). This means that the more students are exposed to holistic education, the better their grades are. Weaker, yet significant correlations of cultural heritage (CH) and modern learning practices (MLP) with GPA explains why the null hypotheses  $H_{01}$  and  $H_{02}$  were rejected. This indicates that the three constructs, particularly HEI, are interrelated and influence academic performance.

### 11.3 Group-Mean Differences

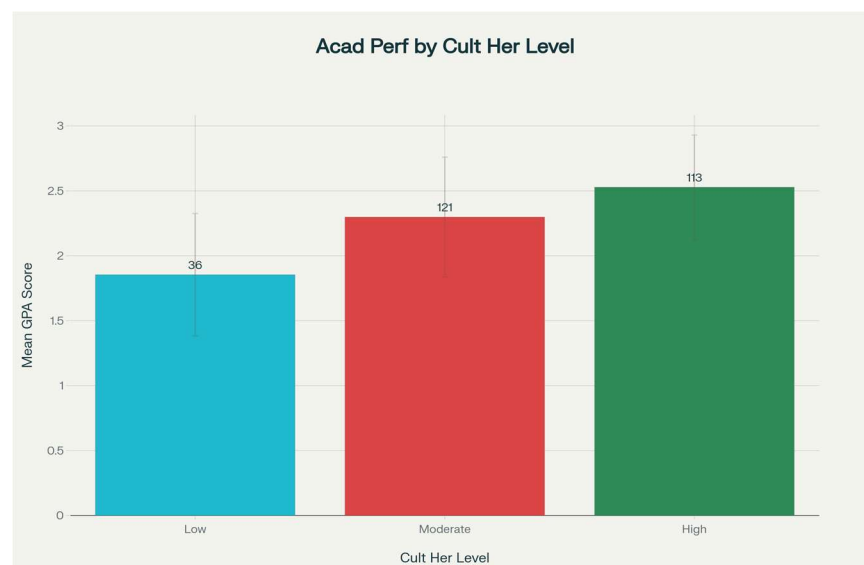


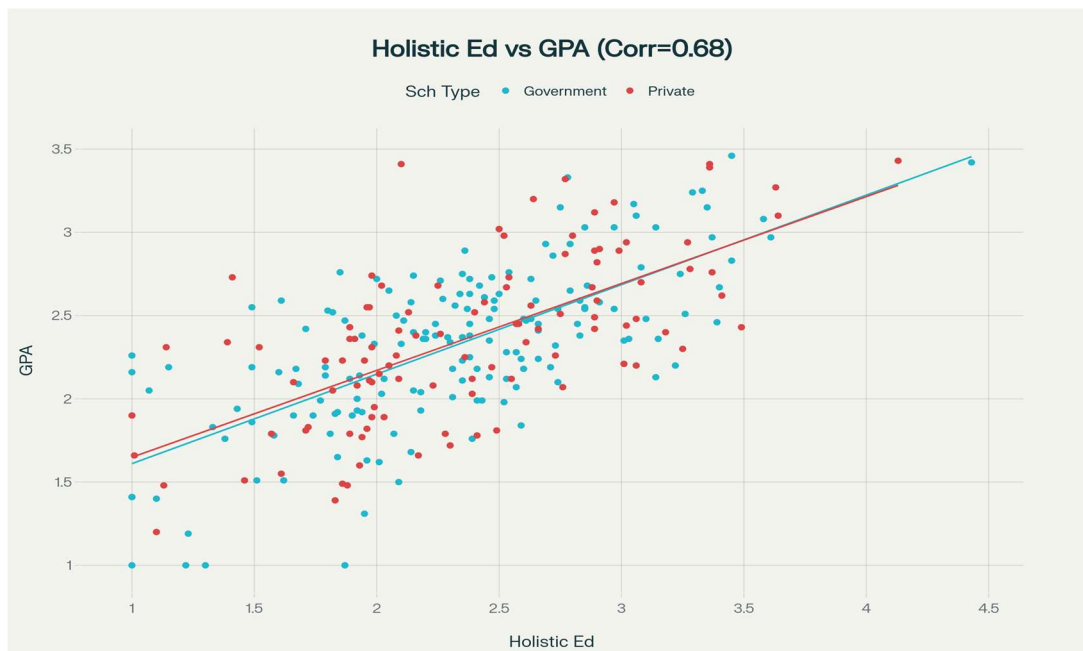
Figure 2: Academic Performance by Cultural Heritage Level

A bar chart shows how students' GPAs improve with increasing levels of cultural heritage (CH) awareness. Advanced statistical testing with ANOVA shows differences in GPA that are attributable to CH ( $F = 22.6, p < .001$ ), modern learning practices MLP ( $F = 36.1, p < .001$ ), and holistic education implementation HEI ( $F = 89.7, p < .001$ ). This result rejects the null hypothesis  $H_{04}$  and confirms NEP 2020's integrative approach.

### 11.4 Mediation Test

Hierarchical regression analysis showed that holistic education implementation (HEI) partially mediates the impacts of cultural heritage (CH) on GPA ( $\beta$  drop 26%) and of Modern Learning Practices (MLP) on GPA ( $\beta$  drop 33%). This finding led to the rejection of null hypothesis  $H_{03}$ . This means that HEI is important, albeit not solely responsible, in connecting both CH and MLP to scholarly

performance. Moreover, a scatter plot demonstrated that both government and private schools exhibited a consistent positive HEI–GPA relationship. This suggests that the advantages of holistic education are applicable beyond the type of school and are relevant across the diverse educational landscape of West Bengal.



**Figure 3: Scatter Plot of Holistic Education vs GPA by School Type**

## 12. Findings

Students had a moderate recognition of cultural heritage (CH) in education, while perceiving holistic education implementation (HEI) at much lower levels. This indicates a disconnect between policy intent and real life. Further, statistical analysis showed HEI was the strongest single predictor of academic performance (GPA) surpassing the influence of cultural heritage awareness and modern learning practice (MLP) implementation. Interestingly, the research showed no significant academic outcome disparity between government and private school students. This indicates that, at least in West Bengal, differences in school facilities do not result in differences in academic performance. This policy shift focuses on equal infrastructure to prioritize strategies that foster integrated pedagogy and holistic teaching as primary drivers of education quality and disparity. Additionally, the lack of gender disparity in GPA results speaks to the possible equity impact of holistic approaches, reinforcing the need to adopt these methods to improve learning for all students.



### 13. Discussion (Objective-wise)

The results show that in schools from West Bengal, the integrated approach of NEP 2020 culture, modern teaching styles, and holistic education is only partially successful. Major implementation gaps remain, especially in the area of holistic education implementation (HEI) where students consider the educational practices to be outdated compared to modern learning practices (MLP). There are strong relationships among HEI, Cultural Heritage (CH), MLP, and students' academic performance (GPA) that confirm the policy's integrative approach where HEI has the strongest tie to GPA. Interestingly, the maximum GPA is achieved when all three dimensions are integrated, affirming the rather additive approach to truly holistic education. However, the enduring gap of expectation and reality stresses the vital need for educational training and professional development. While there's work in progress to reform the curriculum, teaching technology, and assessments, the absence of a systemic framework supporting teacher preparedness becomes a stumbling block for substantial progress. Given that the NEP 2020 aims to transform education on an unprecedented scale, future policies should focus on construction efforts on the framework for strengthening teacher training, ensuring that education becomes a reality, integrative, multi-disciplinary, and values-based for all students.

### 14. Limitations

There are several important limitations to the study. The use of self-report measures to assess awareness of cultural heritage, modern pedagogy, and the application of holistic education practices may suffer from social desirability and recall biases, thereby compromising the reliability of the responses provided. The study geographically focused on West Bengal, which may limit the external validity of the results to other Indian states which have different educational, cultural, and socio-economic landscapes. The scholarly achievement of the students in the study was evaluated using single-term GPAs, which may underestimate longitudinal and holistic student development. Moreover, the absence of socio-economic covariates of the families, like socio-economic status, education of the parents, and resource availability, means that the relationships among the key variables in the study may have been impacted by other unaccounted influences, thus raising questions about the rigor of the research (Blaikie, 2003; Maxwell, 2012). Such identified limitations emphasize the importance of further investigation adopting mixed-method designs, wider geographic sampling, tracking performance longitudinally, and including contextual covariates, to rigorously assess the impact of NEP 2020 in diverse Indian settings.



## 15. Suggestions for Future Research

To advance the empirical foundations of implementing NEP 2020, future efforts should focus on longitudinal causal models between states to assess the integration of cultural heritage (CH), modern learning practices (MLP), and holistic education (HEI) over time, capturing enduring impacts as well as context-specific moderators. Ethnographic classroom studies would provide rich qualitative contextual data on CH pedagogy to illuminate students' and teachers' daily practices and reveal the obstacles or facilitators to genuine integration. Purpose-driven interdisciplinary pedagogy requires targeted professional development, which can be tested through experimental randomized controlled trial models, demonstrating the effectiveness of multidisciplinary, value-driven, and technology-infused frameworks. Additionally, future research should examine the attitudes of parents towards heritage as well as their involvement, as the attitudes of family and community are expected to shape students' receptivity to CH and HEI, thus influencing the ecosystem for realizing the vision of NEP 2020. Addressing these collectively would advance policy recalibration while closing gaps and ensuring the aspiration of holistic education goes beyond policy and materializes in classrooms throughout India.

## 16. Conclusion

This research validates the foundational idea of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which is to merge India's cultural heritage (CH) with modern pedagogy (MLP) and implementing education holistically (HEI), which has an impact on students' academics and development both in the educational and personal spheres. The research findings suggest that students' academic achievements, critical and ethical thinking, as well as their ethical awareness are strong when schools effectively implement holistic integration, which supports the claim that NEP 2020's vision is feasible. However, this research still uncovers a large gap with regard to classroom practices, most notably in holistic education, as students' perceptions of HEI are significantly lower compared to their understanding of CH or MLP. This gap indicates that teaching and learning is not aligned with policy objectives, suggesting that there are more deep-rooted systematic issues at play. The further analysis shows that the inequity of school resources, which is often the target of educational policy changes, has a lesser effect on educational outcomes than the quality of teaching integration and teacher preparedness. Most notably, the absence of gaps between boys and girls, along with the widespread applicability of the results to many types of schools, strengthens the policy's aims related to equity and inclusivity.

Policymakers need to invest in professional development for teachers, context-responsive curricular materials, and continuous evaluation of the implementation of holistic education to put these



policies into action. Teachers need to be empowered in order to put into action the aspirations of NEP 2020. This study concludes that thoughtful and systematic integration of India's cultural ethos alongside innovative teaching methods can nurture students to be globally competent while fostering a deep connection to their cultural identity. However, the realization of this transformative goal requires continuous collaboration among educators, administrators, and the community to ensure that the vision outlined in the policy document is translated into tangible, meaningful, and equitable improvements for all learners. (NEP 2020; Shukla et al., 2022; BHU,2020).

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