

Teaching English Literature under NEP 2020 in Tripura: Problems and Possibilities

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Abstract

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has introduced a transformative vision for higher education in India by advocating multidisciplinary learning, multilingual education, flexibility in curriculum, experiential pedagogy, and holistic student development. The policy marks a significant departure from traditional teacher-centred approaches and encourages institutions to adopt learner-centred, skill-oriented, and culturally inclusive pedagogical practices. Within this broad educational reform, the teaching of English literature occupies a unique position. English continues to function as a global language of communication, research, and professional advancement, while literature remains an important medium for developing critical thinking, ethical awareness, cultural sensitivity, and aesthetic appreciation. However, implementing the objectives of NEP 2020 in the teaching of English literature presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly in culturally diverse and multilingual states such as Tripura.

Tripura is characterised by its rich linguistic and cultural diversity, where Bengali, Kokborok, Manipuri, and several indigenous languages coexist. Students enrolled in higher educational institutions often come from varied socio-economic, linguistic, and educational backgrounds. Many are first-generation learners whose exposure to English is largely confined to classroom instruction. The implementation of NEP 2020 therefore requires significant pedagogical innovation to accommodate these diverse learning needs while maintaining academic standards in English literary studies. This study investigates the current status of English literature teaching in Tripura under the framework of NEP 2020 and critically analyses the problems and possibilities associated with its implementation.

The study adopts a qualitative and analytical methodology based on policy analysis, curriculum review, existing scholarly literature, and contextual interpretation of English literary pedagogy within the socio-cultural environment of Tripura. It examines major issues such as multilingual classrooms, inadequate teacher training, limited digital infrastructure, unequal educational opportunities between rural and urban institutions, insufficient library resources, changing assessment practices, curriculum restructuring, and the challenges faced by teachers in implementing outcome-based education. Simultaneously, the study explores the possibilities created by NEP 2020, including multilingual literary pedagogy, integration of indigenous knowledge systems, comparative literary studies, translation-based learning, project-oriented assessment, digital humanities, and community-engaged literary education.

The article argues that the successful implementation of NEP 2020 in Tripura depends not merely on curriculum revision but on a comprehensive transformation of pedagogical philosophy. English literature teaching must become more inclusive, culturally responsive, technologically supported, and

interdisciplinary. Rather than viewing English as a language detached from local realities, educators should position it as a medium through which students engage with their own histories, cultures, and identities while participating in global academic discourse. The study proposes a contextual pedagogical framework specifically designed for Tripura that combines multilingual instruction, experiential learning, local literary traditions, and digital innovation. Such an approach can strengthen students' linguistic competence, literary appreciation, critical thinking, and employability while preserving the state's diverse cultural heritage.

Keywords: National Education Policy 2020, English Literature, Tripura, Higher Education, Multilingualism, Literary Pedagogy, English Language Teaching, Indigenous Knowledge, Comparative Literature, Experiential Learning.

1. Introduction

Education has always played a central role in shaping individual consciousness, social development, and national progress. In the twenty-first century, educational systems across the world are undergoing significant transformations in response to technological advancement, globalization, changing labour markets, and increasing cultural diversity. Higher education, in particular, has shifted from the traditional transmission of knowledge to a more dynamic process that emphasizes creativity, critical thinking, interdisciplinary learning, and lifelong education. Within this changing landscape, literature continues to occupy a unique position because it nurtures imagination, empathy, cultural understanding, ethical reflection, and intellectual independence. The teaching of English literature, therefore, extends beyond the acquisition of linguistic competence; it becomes a means of understanding human experiences across cultures, histories, and societies.

The Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 with the objective of transforming the country's education system into one that is flexible, inclusive, multidisciplinary, and globally competitive. The policy replaces many conventional approaches to teaching and learning with innovative pedagogical strategies that encourage experiential learning, competency-based education, multilingualism, digital literacy, and holistic student development. NEP 2020 seeks to move away from rote memorization towards analytical reasoning, creativity, problem-solving abilities, and learner autonomy. These reforms have profound implications for the teaching of humanities in general and English literature in particular.

English literature has traditionally occupied an important place within Indian higher education since the colonial period. Initially introduced during British rule primarily to produce administrative personnel familiar with English language and culture, literary studies gradually evolved into an independent academic discipline after independence. Contemporary English literature classrooms in India now include British literature, American literature, postcolonial literature, Indian writing in English, African literature, diaspora literature, feminist writings, Dalit literature, ecological literature, translation studies, and numerous interdisciplinary fields. Consequently, the objectives of teaching English literature have expanded considerably beyond textual analysis to include critical thinking, intercultural competence, ethical reflection, and social awareness.

Despite these developments, English literature classrooms in many Indian universities continue to rely heavily upon lecture-based teaching methods, examination-oriented learning, and teacher-centred

instruction. Students often memorize critical opinions instead of engaging directly with literary texts. Classroom discussions frequently remain limited because many students hesitate to express themselves in English. Literary interpretation becomes dependent upon guidebooks rather than independent reading and analytical thinking. Such practices conflict with the learner-centred philosophy promoted by NEP 2020.

The implementation of NEP 2020 therefore provides an opportunity to rethink the objectives, methods, and outcomes of English literary education. The policy encourages teachers to integrate technology, project-based learning, collaborative learning, multilingual approaches, experiential activities, research-oriented assignments, and interdisciplinary perspectives. Literature classrooms are expected to become spaces where students actively participate in knowledge creation rather than merely receiving information from instructors. Such pedagogical transformation has the potential to make literary studies more meaningful and socially relevant.

However, educational reforms rarely produce identical outcomes across different regions because each state possesses unique linguistic, cultural, economic, and institutional characteristics. The implementation of NEP 2020 in Tripura must therefore be understood within its own socio-cultural context. Located in the northeastern region of India, Tripura represents one of the country's most culturally diverse states. Bengali is the dominant language of communication, while Kokborok serves as the principal language of many indigenous communities. Alongside these languages exist Manipuri and several other tribal languages that contribute to the state's multicultural identity. This multilingual environment significantly influences classroom communication, language acquisition, and literary interpretation.

Most students entering colleges in Tripura have completed their schooling through Bengali-medium institutions, although English is taught as a compulsory subject. Their exposure to spoken English outside the classroom is often limited, particularly in rural areas. Students from tribal communities may additionally navigate between their mother tongue, Bengali, and English, making language learning a complex multilingual experience. As a result, English literature classes frequently involve learners with varying degrees of linguistic proficiency, cultural experiences, and educational backgrounds.

These realities present several pedagogical challenges. Literary texts often contain unfamiliar historical, cultural, philosophical, and linguistic references that require extensive contextual explanation. Classical British literature, for instance, may appear distant from the lived experiences of students in Tripura. Without appropriate pedagogical strategies, students may perceive literary study as difficult, abstract, or disconnected from their own lives. Teachers consequently face the challenge of making literature accessible while maintaining academic rigour.

The National Education Policy 2020 recognizes India's multilingual character and explicitly recommends multilingual teaching wherever possible. Rather than viewing students' mother tongues as obstacles, the policy encourages educators to utilize them as valuable educational resources. This principle has particular significance for English literature classrooms in Tripura. Teachers can employ bilingual explanations, comparative literary analysis, translation activities, and discussions connecting local oral traditions with global literary texts. Such practices not only improve comprehension but also validate students' cultural identities within the academic environment.

Another important dimension of NEP 2020 concerns interdisciplinary education. Literature can no longer be studied in isolation from history, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, environmental studies,

psychology, media studies, and digital humanities. The policy encourages students to develop multiple competencies across disciplines, enabling them to interpret literary texts through diverse theoretical and cultural perspectives. For students in Tripura, this interdisciplinary orientation creates opportunities to study English literature alongside indigenous cultures, folklore, oral narratives, ecology, border studies, migration, and regional history. Such integration enriches literary education while strengthening students' awareness of their own socio-cultural environment.

Digital technology represents another transformative aspect of NEP 2020. Online learning platforms, digital libraries, virtual classrooms, artificial intelligence-assisted learning tools, and multimedia resources have expanded educational possibilities considerably. Nevertheless, digital inequality remains a significant concern within many parts of Tripura, especially in remote and rural areas where internet connectivity and technological infrastructure remain uneven. Teachers implementing digital pedagogy must therefore balance technological innovation with equitable access to educational resources.

Teacher preparedness constitutes another crucial factor determining the success of educational reforms. Many English teachers themselves were trained within conventional pedagogical systems that emphasized lectures and examinations. Transitioning towards learner-centred, competency-based, and technology-supported teaching requires sustained professional development, institutional support, curriculum redesign, and continuous academic engagement. Without adequate training, teachers may find it difficult to translate the principles of NEP 2020 into effective classroom practice.

Assessment practices also require substantial transformation. Traditional university examinations frequently reward memorization rather than interpretation, creativity, or independent thinking. NEP 2020 advocates continuous assessment, project work, presentations, portfolios, collaborative learning, and research-based evaluation. Such methods align more closely with the objectives of literary education because they encourage students to analyse texts critically, express original interpretations, and develop communication skills. Implementing these reforms within existing institutional frameworks, however, requires careful planning and administrative support.

Another important possibility emerging from NEP 2020 is the recognition of local knowledge systems. For many decades, English literature curricula in India concentrated primarily on canonical British texts. Contemporary literary studies increasingly recognize the importance of regional literatures, indigenous narratives, translation studies, oral traditions, and marginalized voices. Tripura possesses a rich repository of tribal folklore, oral epics, myths, songs, and cultural narratives that remain underrepresented within mainstream literary education. Integrating these traditions into English literature classrooms through translation and comparative analysis can create more inclusive curricula while preserving valuable cultural heritage.

This study is motivated by the belief that educational policies achieve meaningful impact only when interpreted within specific regional contexts. The implementation of NEP 2020 in Tripura cannot simply replicate models developed elsewhere in India because the state's multilingualism, cultural diversity, educational infrastructure, and socio-economic realities require context-sensitive pedagogical approaches. The present research therefore seeks to examine how English literature teaching can respond effectively to these local conditions while fulfilling the broader objectives envisioned by the National Education Policy.

The significance of this research extends beyond Tripura itself. Many northeastern states and multilingual regions across India face similar challenges concerning language diversity, educational inequality, teacher preparedness, digital access, and curriculum relevance. The experiences of Tripura may therefore contribute valuable insights into broader national discussions regarding English literary education under NEP 2020. By identifying both structural challenges and emerging opportunities, the study aims to contribute to ongoing debates surrounding multilingual pedagogy, inclusive education, curriculum innovation, and the future of literary studies in Indian higher education.

Ultimately, this article argues that the future of English literature teaching in Tripura lies not in choosing between global and local perspectives but in creating meaningful dialogue between them. English literary education should enable students to appreciate Shakespeare alongside tribal oral narratives, study postcolonial theory alongside local histories, and engage with global literary traditions while remaining deeply connected to their own cultural identities. Such a balanced pedagogical vision embodies the inclusive and transformative spirit of the National Education Policy 2020 and offers a sustainable pathway for strengthening literary education in Tripura's higher educational institutions

2. Review of Literature (International and Indian Scholarship)

The teaching of English literature has undergone significant changes across the world over the last century. Initially regarded as a means of cultivating moral values and aesthetic appreciation, literary education has gradually evolved into an interdisciplinary field that incorporates cultural studies, postcolonial theory, gender studies, translation studies, digital humanities, and multilingual pedagogy. Recent educational reforms, including India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, further redefine literary education by emphasizing learner-centred instruction, critical thinking, experiential learning, and interdisciplinary engagement. Understanding the current challenges and possibilities of teaching English literature in Tripura requires an examination of the existing body of scholarship on literary pedagogy, multilingual education, and educational reform.

2.1 Evolution of English Literature Teaching

English literature emerged as an academic discipline in nineteenth-century Britain primarily to cultivate moral discipline, intellectual refinement, and national identity. During the colonial period, the discipline was exported to countries such as India, where English literary texts became instruments for promoting British cultural values and administrative efficiency. Thomas Babington Macaulay's famous *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) strongly advocated English education, arguing that Western knowledge should replace traditional systems of learning (Macaulay).

Following India's independence, the objectives of English literary studies gradually shifted. English was no longer viewed solely as a colonial language but increasingly as a global medium of communication, higher education, scientific research, and international collaboration. Consequently, university curricula expanded beyond canonical British literature to include American, African, Caribbean, Australian, Indian, and postcolonial literatures.

Today, English literature serves multiple educational purposes. It develops language proficiency, enhances communication skills, strengthens analytical reasoning, encourages intercultural understanding, and

promotes ethical reflection. Modern literary pedagogy therefore emphasizes interpretation rather than memorization and encourages students to become active participants in literary discourse.

2.2 Literature as Critical Pedagogy

One of the most influential educational thinkers whose work continues to shape literary pedagogy is Paulo Freire. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire criticizes the "banking model" of education in which teachers deposit information into passive learners. Instead, he advocates dialogic education, where teachers and students collaborate in constructing knowledge through discussion, reflection, and critical inquiry.

Freire's ideas have profound implications for English literature classrooms. Literary texts should not merely be explained by teachers for examination purposes. Rather, students should interrogate characters, themes, ideologies, and social contexts while relating literature to contemporary realities. Such a learner-centred approach closely aligns with the philosophy of NEP 2020, which advocates experiential learning, critical thinking, and classroom participation.

Similarly, bell hooks argues that education should be transformative rather than merely informative. In *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), she emphasizes inclusive classrooms where students' identities, experiences, and voices become integral components of learning. Her concept of "engaged pedagogy" is particularly relevant for multicultural classrooms such as those found in Tripura, where students represent diverse linguistic, ethnic, and cultural communities.

2.3 Reader-Response Theory and Student-Centred Learning

Traditional literary criticism often regarded the meaning of a text as fixed and authoritative. However, twentieth-century literary theory challenged this assumption by emphasizing the active role of readers in creating meaning.

Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory argues that reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text. According to Rosenblatt, literary meaning emerges through the reader's personal experiences, emotions, and cultural background. Every reading therefore becomes unique because different readers interpret texts differently.

Wolfgang Iser similarly proposes that literary texts contain "gaps" that readers fill through imagination and interpretation. Stanley Fish further argues that interpretation depends upon interpretive communities whose shared assumptions shape meaning.

These theories support student-centred literary teaching because they recognize learners as active interpreters rather than passive recipients of established critical opinions. Within the multilingual classrooms of Tripura, students' diverse cultural experiences may generate multiple valid interpretations of literary texts. Such diversity enriches classroom discussion and promotes critical engagement.

2.4 Postcolonial Perspectives on English Literary Education

Postcolonial scholarship has fundamentally transformed the teaching of English literature by questioning colonial assumptions embedded within traditional curricula.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) demonstrates how Western literary and academic discourses constructed the East through stereotypes that justified colonial domination. Said's work encourages students to examine literature critically, identifying ideological assumptions rather than accepting texts as neutral representations of reality.

Homi K. Bhabha introduces concepts such as hybridity, mimicry, and the "third space," arguing that colonial encounters generate complex cultural identities rather than simple oppositions between colonizer and colonized. His theoretical framework is particularly useful for understanding multilingual societies where multiple cultural traditions coexist.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak raises important questions concerning representation, marginalized voices, and the limitations of dominant intellectual frameworks. Her work encourages literary scholars to examine whose voices remain excluded from literary canons.

In the Indian context, these postcolonial perspectives have encouraged universities to diversify English literature curricula by including African, Caribbean, South Asian, Dalit, feminist, Indigenous, and diasporic literatures alongside British classics.

2.5 English Literature and Multicultural Education

Global scholarship increasingly recognizes that literature plays a crucial role in promoting multicultural understanding.

James Banks argues that multicultural education should help students appreciate cultural diversity while developing democratic values. Literature offers opportunities for students to encounter experiences different from their own, thereby fostering empathy and intercultural competence.

Geneva Gay similarly advocates culturally responsive teaching, emphasizing that students learn more effectively when educational practices acknowledge and respect their cultural backgrounds. Teachers should therefore connect classroom learning with learners' lived experiences instead of treating cultural diversity as irrelevant.

These ideas have considerable significance for Tripura. Students come from Bengali, Kokborok, Manipuri, Reang, Chakma, Halam, and several other linguistic communities. English literature classrooms become more inclusive when teachers relate literary themes to local histories, oral traditions, and indigenous cultural practices.

2.6 Digital Humanities and Contemporary Literary Pedagogy

Technological advancement has significantly influenced literature teaching worldwide. Digital humanities combine traditional literary studies with digital tools for textual analysis, online collaboration, multimedia learning, and electronic publishing.

Scholars such as Katherine Hayles argue that digital environments transform reading practices by encouraging interactive learning rather than passive consumption. Online archives, digital libraries, multimedia presentations, podcasts, and virtual discussions have expanded access to literary resources.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education institutions increasingly integrated digital technologies into literature classrooms. Teachers now employ Learning Management Systems (LMS),

online discussion forums, digital annotation tools, virtual seminars, and multimedia resources to facilitate literary learning.

NEP 2020 similarly emphasizes technology-enabled education, recommending digital infrastructure, online learning platforms, and virtual laboratories. Nevertheless, scholars caution that digital innovation should complement rather than replace meaningful teacher-student interaction.

2.7 English Literary Studies in India

The teaching of English literature in India has witnessed remarkable expansion since independence. Universities now include diverse literary traditions representing multiple geographical, linguistic, and cultural contexts.

According to Gauri Viswanathan, English literary education during colonial rule functioned as an instrument of cultural governance. However, post-independence scholars gradually redefined the discipline to reflect Indian realities and global literary developments.

Meenakshi Mukherjee argues that Indian universities should move beyond rigid colonial literary hierarchies by recognizing Indian Writing in English as an integral component of literary studies. Her work contributed significantly to establishing Indian English literature as a legitimate academic discipline.

Similarly, Sisir Kumar Das emphasizes comparative literary approaches that examine relationships between Indian regional literatures and world literature. Such comparative perspectives encourage students to understand literature across linguistic and cultural boundaries rather than within isolated national traditions.

Contemporary Indian universities increasingly include works by writers such as Rabindranath Tagore, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Mahasweta Devi, Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, Easterine Kire, and numerous regional authors. This diversification reflects broader attempts to decolonize literary curricula while promoting inclusive representation.

2.8 Research on English Language and Literature Teaching in India

Numerous Indian scholars have investigated challenges associated with English education.

N. Krishnaswamy and Lalitha Krishnaswamy argue that India's multilingual environment requires flexible approaches to English language teaching rather than rigid monolingual methodologies. They emphasize that teachers should recognize students' linguistic diversity as an educational resource rather than a barrier.

Scholars studying higher education repeatedly identify several persistent challenges, including inadequate language proficiency among students, examination-oriented pedagogy, insufficient teacher training, overcrowded classrooms, limited classroom interaction, dependence on guidebooks, and unequal educational resources across institutions.

Research also highlights the mismatch between university curricula and employability skills. Students frequently possess theoretical literary knowledge but lack communication skills, analytical writing abilities, presentation experience, collaborative learning competencies, and digital literacy. NEP 2020 attempts to address these concerns through competency-based education and interdisciplinary learning.

2.9 Changing Objectives of Literary Education

The objectives of English literature teaching have expanded considerably during the twenty-first century. Literature is no longer viewed merely as an academic subject concerned with historical periods, literary movements, or canonical authors. Instead, literary education increasingly contributes to broader educational goals such as critical thinking, ethical reasoning, creativity, emotional intelligence, intercultural dialogue, democratic citizenship, and lifelong learning.

Modern literary pedagogy therefore encourages students to ask questions rather than memorize answers. Teachers facilitate interpretation instead of imposing fixed meanings. Assessment emphasizes analytical writing, classroom discussion, presentations, research projects, reflective journals, and collaborative learning rather than reproduction of critical notes.

These developments strongly resonate with the principles underlying NEP 2020. The policy's emphasis on flexibility, interdisciplinarity, multilingualism, experiential learning, and holistic education reflects many international trends that have already transformed literary education across the world. However, implementing these ideals within specific regional contexts such as Tripura requires careful consideration of local linguistic diversity, institutional capacities, teacher preparedness, and socio-cultural realities. Existing scholarship provides valuable theoretical foundations, but there remains a need for context-specific studies examining how these pedagogical transformations can be effectively realized within the higher education system of Tripura.

2.10 National Education Policy 2020 and the Transformation of English Literary Education

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents one of the most comprehensive educational reforms undertaken in India since the National Policy on Education of 1986. It aims to transform Indian education into a learner-centred, multidisciplinary, flexible, and inclusive system capable of meeting the demands of the twenty-first century. Unlike earlier educational frameworks, which often emphasized examination-oriented learning and rigid disciplinary boundaries, NEP 2020 advocates competency-based education, critical thinking, creativity, experiential learning, multilingualism, and the integration of technology into teaching and learning (Government of India).

For English literature teaching, the policy signifies a major pedagogical shift. Traditionally, literature classes in many Indian universities have relied heavily on lectures, note-taking, and end-semester examinations. Students often memorized critical interpretations rather than engaging directly with literary texts. NEP 2020 challenges this model by encouraging active classroom participation, project-based learning, collaborative discussions, research-oriented assignments, and continuous assessment. The role of the teacher is therefore transformed from that of an information provider to a facilitator who guides students in constructing their own interpretations of literary works.

Another important aspect of NEP 2020 is its emphasis on multidisciplinary education. Literary studies are expected to interact with history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, political science, environmental studies, anthropology, digital humanities, media studies, and cultural studies. Such interdisciplinarity enables students to understand literature not merely as artistic expression but also as a reflection of historical, political, social, and cultural processes. Scholars such as Kumar (2021), Mishra (2022), and

Sharma (2023) argue that this interdisciplinary orientation has the potential to revitalize humanities education by making literary studies more relevant to contemporary society.

The policy also emphasizes flexibility through the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC), multiple entry and exit options, and outcome-based education. These reforms encourage universities to redesign curricula in ways that accommodate diverse learner needs while maintaining academic quality. For English departments, this requires substantial curriculum revision, innovative teaching methodologies, and new forms of assessment that evaluate analytical thinking rather than rote memorization.

2.11 Multilingualism and English Literature Teaching

Among the most significant contributions of NEP 2020 is its recognition of India's linguistic diversity. The policy advocates multilingual education and recommends the use of students' home languages wherever possible during the learning process. Rather than perceiving multilingualism as an obstacle, NEP 2020 presents it as an intellectual and cultural resource capable of strengthening cognitive development and educational inclusion.

International research consistently supports multilingual education. Jim Cummins argues that students' first languages facilitate rather than hinder the acquisition of additional languages. His theory of Common Underlying Proficiency suggests that knowledge acquired in one language can transfer to another, thereby strengthening overall linguistic competence. Similarly, Ofelia García's concept of translanguage emphasizes the fluid movement between languages as a natural feature of multilingual communication rather than a deficiency.

These theoretical perspectives have important implications for English literature classrooms in India. Students often interpret literary texts through their own linguistic and cultural experiences. Allowing bilingual explanations, comparative translation, and multilingual classroom discussions can improve comprehension while reducing anxiety associated with exclusive English-medium instruction.

For Tripura, multilingual pedagogy is particularly relevant because classrooms often include students whose first languages are Bengali, Kokborok, Manipuri, Chakma, Reang, or other indigenous languages. English frequently functions as a third language for many learners. Consequently, rigid English-only pedagogical approaches may disadvantage students from rural and tribal backgrounds. Several scholars therefore recommend flexible multilingual teaching strategies that integrate local languages into literary discussion without compromising the development of English proficiency.

Translation activities represent one particularly effective pedagogical strategy. Students can compare English literary texts with Bengali translations or translate indigenous oral narratives into English. Such activities simultaneously strengthen language skills, literary appreciation, intercultural competence, and awareness of linguistic diversity. Translation also enables students to appreciate the cultural specificity of literary expression while recognizing universal human experiences across languages.

2.12 English Education in Northeast India

The Northeastern region of India occupies a unique position within Indian higher education because of its extraordinary linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. States such as Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Tripura collectively represent hundreds of languages,

dialects, and indigenous communities. English often functions as a bridge language facilitating communication across diverse linguistic groups.

Educational research conducted in Northeast India indicates that English occupies a complex position within society. On one hand, it provides access to higher education, employment opportunities, national mobility, and global communication. On the other hand, students frequently encounter difficulties because English remains distant from their everyday linguistic environments.

Researchers such as Tilak (2019), Mohanty (2020), and Singh (2022) observe that higher education institutions in the Northeast continue to face challenges relating to infrastructure, teacher shortages, digital access, educational inequality, and language diversity. Despite these obstacles, the region possesses enormous cultural resources that can enrich literary education. Indigenous folklore, oral traditions, myths, ecological knowledge, and regional histories offer valuable materials for comparative literary studies.

Contemporary literary scholarship increasingly recognizes the contributions of Northeastern writers including Temsula Ao, Easterine Kire, Mamang Dai, Robin S. Ngangom, Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih, and Janice Pariat. Their works explore identity, memory, migration, ecology, violence, gender, oral traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems. The inclusion of such writers within English literature curricula represents an important step toward decolonizing literary education and promoting regional representation.

2.13 English Literature Teaching in Tripura

Compared to other regions of India, relatively limited scholarly attention has been devoted specifically to English literature teaching in Tripura. Existing research primarily focuses on English language learning, multilingual education, educational infrastructure, or higher education policy rather than literary pedagogy itself. This absence of focused research highlights the need for systematic academic investigation.

Tripura presents a distinctive educational context because of its multilingual population and diverse socio-cultural composition. Bengali serves as the dominant language of administration and education, while Kokborok enjoys official recognition and functions as an important language of indigenous communities. In addition, several tribal languages continue to be spoken throughout the state. Consequently, English literature classrooms often bring together students from varied linguistic backgrounds whose educational experiences differ considerably.

Most undergraduate students entering colleges in Tripura have received their school education through Bengali-medium institutions, although English is taught as a compulsory subject. Students from tribal communities may possess additional linguistic identities, using Kokborok or another indigenous language at home while studying through Bengali and English in educational institutions. This multilingual environment creates both opportunities and pedagogical challenges.

Teachers frequently report variations in students' English proficiency, reading habits, confidence in oral communication, and familiarity with literary terminology. Rural colleges may additionally face shortages of library resources, digital facilities, language laboratories, and updated teaching materials. Internet connectivity also remains uneven across certain regions, limiting the effective implementation of technology-enabled learning recommended by NEP 2020.

Nevertheless, Tripura possesses significant strengths that can support innovative literary pedagogy. The state's rich traditions of folklore, oral narratives, tribal mythology, folk songs, performance traditions, and multilingual cultural practices provide valuable opportunities for comparative literary analysis. NEP 2020 encourages institutions to integrate local knowledge systems into higher education curricula. Within English literature classrooms, this recommendation creates possibilities for studying indigenous narratives alongside British, American, postcolonial, African, and Indian literary texts.

Scholars working on multilingual education argue that contextualizing literary texts through local cultural experiences significantly enhances student engagement. For example, themes of displacement, identity, community, ecology, gender, and cultural memory found in world literature can be meaningfully compared with similar concerns expressed in Tripura's oral traditions and contemporary regional writings. Such comparative approaches make literary study more relevant to students while simultaneously preserving local cultural heritage.

Existing literature therefore suggests that the successful implementation of NEP 2020 in Tripura depends upon balancing global literary traditions with regional cultural knowledge. English literature should not function as an isolated academic discipline detached from students' lived experiences but as an inclusive space where local identities and global perspectives interact constructively. While the available scholarship provides important theoretical insights into multilingual education and learner-centred pedagogy, detailed research focusing specifically on English literature teaching under NEP 2020 in Tripura remains limited. This gap forms the foundation for the present study and will be examined critically in the following section.

2.14 Critical Synthesis of Previous Studies

The review of the existing literature reveals that research on English literature teaching has developed substantially over the past few decades. International scholars have shifted literary pedagogy from teacher-centred instruction towards learner-centred, dialogic, and experiential approaches. Freire (1970) rejected the traditional "banking model" of education and advocated classroom dialogue, while Rosenblatt (1978) emphasized the transactional relationship between the reader and the literary text. Reader-response theorists, postcolonial critics, and multicultural educators collectively argue that literary meaning is not fixed but is shaped by readers' social, cultural, linguistic, and historical experiences. These theoretical developments have significantly influenced contemporary English literature teaching across universities worldwide.

Similarly, studies conducted in India indicate that English literary education has gradually moved away from a purely colonial and canonical framework towards a more inclusive and interdisciplinary curriculum. Contemporary syllabi now include Indian Writing in English, Dalit literature, women's writing, postcolonial literature, African literature, environmental humanities, translation studies, and cultural studies. Researchers such as Meenakshi Mukherjee, Gauri Viswanathan, Sisir Kumar Das, and Harish Trivedi have demonstrated that literary education in India must engage with both global literary traditions and indigenous intellectual traditions.

The emergence of the National Education Policy 2020 has generated another significant body of scholarship. Most recent studies focus on curriculum flexibility, multidisciplinary education, digital learning, competency-based teaching, multilingualism, outcome-based education, and institutional

reforms. Researchers generally agree that NEP 2020 represents a major shift from content-oriented education to competency-oriented education. Students are expected to develop communication skills, analytical reasoning, creativity, ethical awareness, collaborative learning abilities, and lifelong learning habits rather than merely acquiring subject knowledge.

Another important area of scholarship concerns multilingual education. International researchers such as Jim Cummins, Ofelia García, and Stephen May consistently demonstrate that multilingual learners benefit when their first languages are recognized as educational resources rather than obstacles. Indian scholars similarly argue that multilingual pedagogical practices enhance comprehension, classroom participation, confidence, and conceptual understanding. These findings are particularly significant for states such as Tripura, where students enter higher education from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Research on higher education in Northeast India has also expanded during recent years. Studies emphasize the educational importance of indigenous knowledge systems, tribal literature, oral traditions, ecological knowledge, regional history, and cultural diversity. Scholars argue that universities in the Northeast should develop curricula reflecting regional realities rather than relying exclusively on metropolitan academic models. The inclusion of writers such as Temsula Ao, Mamang Dai, Easterine Kire, Robin S. Ngangom, and Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih demonstrates increasing recognition of Northeastern literary traditions within English departments.

Despite these important contributions, existing research remains fragmented. Most studies examine English language teaching rather than English literature teaching. Others focus primarily on educational policy without analysing actual classroom practices. Research on multilingualism often concentrates on school education, whereas comparatively little attention has been devoted to undergraduate literary education. Consequently, important questions regarding literary pedagogy under NEP 2020 remain insufficiently explored.

Another limitation concerns methodology. Many published studies adopt broad national perspectives that overlook the educational realities of individual states. India's enormous linguistic, cultural, and institutional diversity means that educational reforms cannot be implemented uniformly across all regions. Policies require contextual interpretation that reflects local educational conditions. However, state-specific investigations remain relatively limited, especially for smaller states in Northeast India.

The review further reveals that literature discussing NEP 2020 frequently celebrates the policy's objectives without critically examining the practical challenges associated with implementation. Issues such as teacher preparedness, institutional infrastructure, multilingual classroom management, assessment reforms, digital inequality, curriculum transition, faculty workload, and student diversity often receive only limited attention. Consequently, there remains a considerable gap between policy discourse and classroom realities.

Moreover, existing scholarship generally examines multilingualism from the perspective of language acquisition rather than literary interpretation. Very few researchers investigate how multilingual pedagogical practices influence students' engagement with poetry, drama, fiction, literary theory, or critical writing. Questions concerning bilingual literary discussions, translation-based literary analysis, comparative reading practices, and culturally responsive literary interpretation remain underexplored.

Similarly, while digital humanities have become increasingly important internationally, relatively few studies examine their applicability within colleges located in resource-constrained regions such as Tripura. The availability of digital libraries, online literary archives, virtual classrooms, multimedia teaching resources, and artificial intelligence-assisted learning tools varies considerably across institutions. Existing literature provides limited guidance regarding how digital literary pedagogy can be adapted to colleges with uneven technological infrastructure.

2.15 Research Gap

A careful review of the available scholarship identifies several significant research gaps that justify the present investigation.

First, although NEP 2020 has generated considerable academic discussion, very few studies specifically examine its implications for teaching English literature. Most researchers focus on general educational reforms, curriculum restructuring, teacher education, or language instruction. Literary pedagogy remains comparatively underrepresented within current NEP scholarship.

Second, existing literature on English education in Tripura primarily concentrates on English language proficiency, school education, or general higher education. There is almost no comprehensive academic study that analyses the teaching of English literature under the framework of NEP 2020 in Tripura's colleges and universities. This absence of region-specific research creates a significant gap in the existing body of knowledge.

Third, the multilingual educational environment of Tripura has not been adequately examined from the perspective of literary education. While several scholars acknowledge the state's linguistic diversity, few investigate how multilingual classrooms influence students' interpretation of literary texts, participation in classroom discussions, critical writing, or literary appreciation.

Fourth, previous research pays insufficient attention to the relationship between English literature and indigenous cultural traditions. Tripura possesses a rich heritage of oral narratives, folklore, tribal mythology, folk songs, rituals, and performance traditions. Yet these cultural resources remain largely absent from discussions of English literary pedagogy. The potential for comparative literary studies involving local traditions and global literature therefore remains substantially unexplored.

Fifth, little research investigates the practical challenges encountered by teachers implementing NEP 2020 within English literature classrooms. Questions relating to faculty preparedness, assessment reforms, digital teaching, interdisciplinary curriculum design, project-based learning, and outcome-based education require systematic investigation within the specific institutional context of Tripura.

Finally, no existing study proposes a comprehensive pedagogical framework specifically designed for English literature teaching under NEP 2020 in Tripura. Most available research identifies problems without offering context-sensitive solutions. This study therefore seeks not only to analyse existing challenges but also to propose an innovative pedagogical model capable of integrating multilingual education, indigenous knowledge systems, comparative literary studies, experiential learning, digital resources, and learner-centred teaching.

2.16 Justification of the Present Study

The present study is both timely and necessary because higher education institutions across Tripura are currently implementing the provisions of NEP 2020. Curriculum restructuring alone cannot ensure educational transformation unless accompanied by corresponding changes in pedagogy, assessment, teacher preparation, and institutional support. English literature, as a discipline that cultivates critical thinking, intercultural understanding, ethical reasoning, and creative imagination, occupies a central position within this transformation.

This research aims to bridge the gap between educational policy and classroom practice by examining how the principles of NEP 2020 can be meaningfully implemented within the multilingual and multicultural context of Tripura. Rather than treating the state merely as a peripheral educational region, the study recognizes Tripura as a valuable site for developing innovative pedagogical practices capable of enriching English literary education nationally.

The study also contributes to the growing movement toward the decolonization of literary education. Instead of positioning English literature as separate from local cultures, it argues for meaningful dialogue between global literary traditions and the rich indigenous heritage of Tripura. Such an approach promotes cultural inclusivity while preserving academic rigor and international relevance.

Most importantly, this research proposes an original pedagogical framework tailored specifically to the educational realities of Tripura. By integrating multilingual teaching, comparative literature, indigenous narratives, translation studies, digital pedagogy, and experiential learning, the study offers practical recommendations that may assist teachers, curriculum designers, policymakers, and higher education institutions in implementing NEP 2020 more effectively.

Accordingly, the present investigation seeks to fill an important gap in contemporary scholarship by providing one of the first comprehensive academic analyses of **Teaching English Literature under NEP 2020 in Tripura: Problems and Possibilities**. It aims not only to identify existing challenges but also to demonstrate how the unique cultural and linguistic diversity of Tripura can become a strength rather than a limitation in the teaching of English literature.

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