A STUDY ON THE REPRESENTATION OF NAGA CULTURAL VALUES & HERITAGE IN THE EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM AND CONTENT OF THE STATE

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Abstract

This research explores the cultural gap in schooling, concentrating on Nagaland, India, where many Naga tribes have distinct cultural identities. The study looks into how much of the Naga culture has been incorporated into school curriculum. To learn more about how different Naga tribes are represented in the curriculum, a survey with 94 participants was undertaken. The findings point to a disconnect between the curriculum and students by highlighting the stark differences between the rich cultural legacy of the Naga tribes and how they are portrayed in instructional materials. In order to close the gap and improve educational opportunities, the study emphasizes the significance of culturally inclusive education and suggests incorporating Naga cultural components. It also draws attention to how cultural differences and the digital divide interact to affect access to educational materials. The findings highlight the need of fair access to resources and culturally sensitive instruction, with implications for educational policy and practice.

Keywords: *Cultural Divide, Curriculum, Cultural Representation, Academic Success, Culturally Responsive Teaching, Nagaland*

Introduction

The Nagas, an ethnic group native to the hilly and mountainous regions of India's North East, particularly the state of Nagaland, are distinguished by their unique cultural complexity from the rest of India. With over 16 recognized tribes, each Naga tribe has its distinct language and intricate customs, often characterized by a strong sense of community and kinship ties (Thong, 2004). Unlike the predominantly Hindu religious landscape of India, the Nagas largely follow Christianity, a result of missionary influences in the 19th and 20th centuries (Ao, 2002). This places a major layer of distinction for the Nagas from the rest of mainland India which is Hindu majority (Aier, 1993). This religious difference has contributed to distinct social norms and festivals, such as the Hornbill Festival, which showcases their rich heritage, diverging from the more widely celebrated Indian festivals like Diwali and Holi. The festivals of the Nagas are community-centric and celebrate agricultural cycles and ancestral spirits, diverging from the pan-Indian Hindu festivals that often worship a pantheon of deities (Kikon, 2005).Politically, the Nagas' quest for recognition of their unique identity has led to a complex relationship with the Indian state, distinct from the relatively integrated polity of the mainland (Bhaumik, 2007). The

Nagas also have a unique political history, having sought recognition of their sovereignty through prolonged interactions with the Indian government, leading to a distinct political identity within the Indian union (Kumar, 1999). Additionally, the traditional Naga attire, adorned with patterns that narrate ancestral tales, and their terraced hill farming practices, are also culturally distinctive (Jamir & Ao, 2009).The tribal motifs used in Nagas attires traditionally carry cultural significance, as opposed to the more widespread sarees and salwar kameez of the Indian plains (Hutton, 1921). The distinct societal structures and cultural practices of the Nagas present a vivid contrast to mainland India's predominantly Indo-Aryan and Dravidian cultures. Their social fabric is traditionally built on clan kinship and village alliances rather than the caste system prevalent in much of mainstream India (von Fürer-Haimendorf, 1969). Linguistically, the Naga groups speak multiple Tibeto-Burman languages, markedly different from the Indo-European and Dravidian language families dominant in the rest of the country (Grierson, 1903). Economically, the Naga hills' subsistence farming contrasts with the varied agricultural and industrial economy of the rest of India (Ramunny, 1993).Collectively, these factors not only mark the Nagas as a unique cultural group within

the Indian subcontinent but also contribute to the rich diversity of India's demographic fabric.

Cultural Divide in Education

The cultural divide in education refers to the disparities in educational content and access that arise from differences in cultural backgrounds. This divide can lead to gaps in achievement and engagement among students from diverse cultures. Educational content that does not reflect the cultural diversity of the student population can exacerbate this divide (Gay, 2010). For instance, curriculum content that predominantly features Western perspectives and histories may not resonate with students from other cultural backgrounds, which can affect their learning experience and outcomes (Banks, 2019).

Research suggests that when educational content is inclusive and reflects the cultural backgrounds of all students, it can lead to better engagement and academic success, particularly for minority students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Furthermore, culturally responsive teaching practices that acknowledge students' cultural heritages as assets rather than barriers to learning have been shown to be effective in bridging the cultural divide in education (Paris, 2012).

In many parts of the world, there is a growing recognition of the need to diversify educational content. This involves not only including multicultural perspectives in the curriculum but also employing teaching strategies that are respectful and inclusive of students' cultural experiences (Banks & McGee Banks, 2004). This approach to education not only addresses the cultural divide but also prepares students to function in a multicultural world (Gay, 2013).

Moreover, the digital divide has an intersection with cultural disparities, affecting how educational content is accessed. Students from marginalized communities may have less access to digital resources, which can limit their educational opportunities, especially in increasingly technology-driven learning environments (Warschauer, 2004).To effectively address both the cultural and educational content divides, it is necessary for educational policies and practices to be informed by a deep understanding of cultural diversity and to actively seek to close gaps in both representation and access.

Methodology

In examining the incorporation of Naga cultural elements into the educational curriculum, a survey methodology was employed, targeting a sample of 94 participants drawn from various tribes within Nagaland. The purpose of the survey was to gather participants' perspectives on the extent to which their culture is reflected within the educational content provided in schools. The questionnaire included 14 items designed to ascertain the presence of cultural values, beliefs, norms, language, symbols, rituals, and socio-economic and political structures in the curriculum.

Participants were selected using a stratified sampling method to ensure a representative cross-section of Naga tribes. The survey was administered through a combination of online and paper formats, considering the diverse access to technology among participants. The responses were intended to be quantified and analyzed using statistical methods to identify prevalent trends and perceptions.

The hypothesis guiding this research posited that the current educational curriculum in Nagaland does not fully incorporate the rich cultural heritage of the Naga tribes. It was theorized that a lack of cultural representation might contribute to a disconnect between students and the educational content, potentially impacting the engagement and academic success of Naga students. The outcomes of this survey are expected to provide empirical evidence to support or refute this hypothesis, thereby informing educators and policymakers about the effectiveness of culturally inclusive education practices in Nagaland.
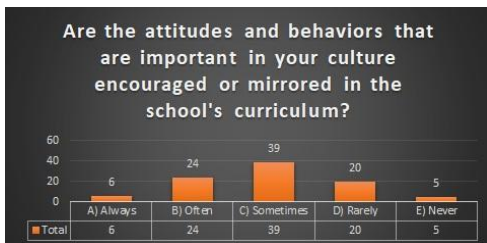
Figure 1- Encouragement of Important Cultural Attitudes and Behaviors in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 1represents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether the attitudes and behaviors that are important in their culture are encouraged or mirrored in the school's curriculum. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 39 individuals indicating that these cultural attitudes and behaviors are occasionally encouraged or mirrored in the curriculum. Additionally, 24 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feels that these aspects of their culture are frequently integrated into the curriculum.

Furthermore, 20 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent encouragement or mirroring of these attitudes and behaviors in the curriculum. A smaller number, 6 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that these cultural attitudes and behaviors are consistently encouraged or mirrored. Finally, 5 individuals selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that the curriculum never includes or reflects these aspects of their culture.
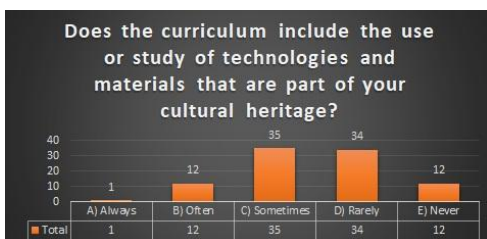

Figure 2 Use or Study of Cultural Heritage Technologies and Materials in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 2 represents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether the curriculum includes the use or study of technologies and materials that are part of their cultural heritage. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 35 individuals indicating that the curriculum occasionally incorporates these technologies and materials. Additionally, 34 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feels that such elements of their cultural heritage are frequently integrated into the curriculum.

Furthermore, 12 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent inclusion of these technologies and materials in the curriculum. A smaller number, 12 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that the use or study of technologies and materials from their cultural heritage is consistently integrated. Finally, 1 individual selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that the curriculum never includes such elements from their cultural heritage.
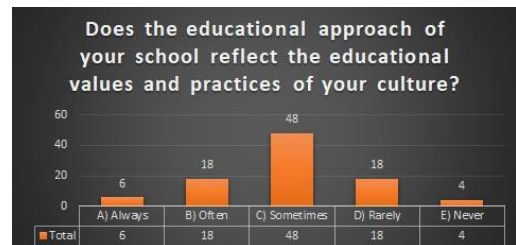

Figure 3 Reflection of the Traditional Culture and Educational Values in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 3 represents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether the educational approach of their school reflects the educational values and practices of their culture. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 48 individuals indicating that the educational approach occasionally aligns with their cultural values and practices. Additionally, 18 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feels that their school's educational approach frequently reflects their cultural values.

Furthermore, 18 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent alignment between the school's educational approach and their cultural values and practices. A smaller number, 6 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that the educational approach of their school consistently

reflects their cultural values. Finally, 4 individuals selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that the school's educational approach never aligns with their cultural values and practices.
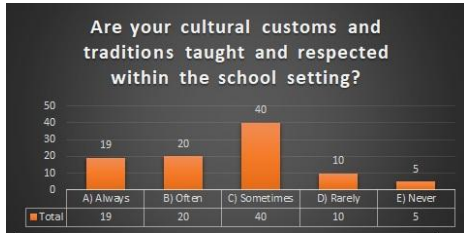

Figure 4 Teaching and Respect of the Cultural Customs and Traditions in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 4 represents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether their cultural customs and traditions are taught and respected within the school setting. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 40 individuals indicating that their cultural customs and traditions are occasionally taught and respected within the school. Additionally, 20 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feels that these aspects of their culture are frequently integrated and respected.

Furthermore, 19 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent teaching and respect for their cultural customs and traditions in the school setting. A smaller number, 10 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that their cultural customs and traditions are consistently taught and respected within the school. Finally, 5 individuals selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that their cultural customs and traditions are never taught or respected within the school setting.
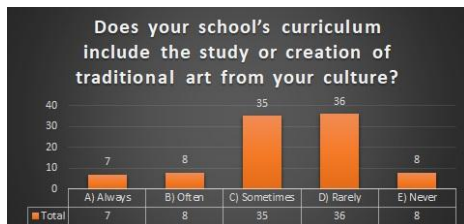

Figure 5 Study or Creation of Traditional Art and Culture in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 5 presents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether their school's curriculum includes the study or creation of traditional art from their culture. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 36 individuals indicating that the curriculum occasionally covers the study or creation of traditional art. Additionally, 35 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feels that this aspect is frequently integrated into their school's curriculum.

Furthermore, 8 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent inclusion of traditional art from their culture in the curriculum. A smaller number, 7 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that the study or creation of traditional art is consistently incorporated. Finally, another 8 individuals selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that the curriculum never includes traditional art from their culture.
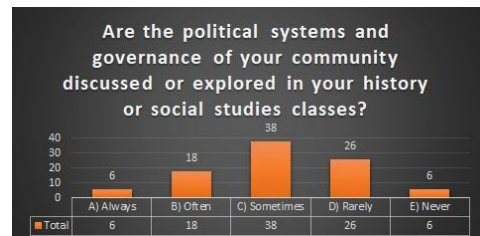

Figure 6 Discussion or Exploration of the Community's Political Systems and Governance in the History or Social Studies Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 6 represents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether the political systems and governance of their community are discussed or explored in their history or social studies classes. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 38 individuals indicating that these topics are occasionally covered in their classes. Additionally, 26 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feels that discussions about their community's political systems and governance are frequent in their classes.

Furthermore, 18 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent coverage of these topics in their classes. A smaller number, 6

individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that the political systems and governance of their community are consistently explored in their history or social studies classes. Finally, 6 individuals selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that these topics are never discussed or explored in their classes.

Figure 7 Presence and Teaching of the Local Economy and Traditional Livelihoods in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 7 represents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether their curriculum includes content that teaches about the local economy and traditional livelihoods of their culture. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 36 individuals indicating that the curriculum occasionally covers these topics related to their local economy and traditional livelihoods. Additionally, 29 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feels that such content is frequently integrated into the curriculum.

Furthermore, 16 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent coverage of the local economy and traditional livelihoods in the curriculum. A smaller number, 2 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that this content is consistently included in their curriculum. Finally, 11 individuals selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that the curriculum never teaches about the local economy and traditional livelihoods of their culture.
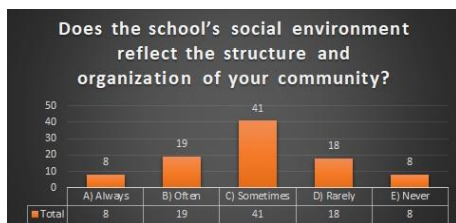

Figure 8 Reflection of the Community's Structure and Organization in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 8 presents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether the school's social environment reflects the structure and organization of their community. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 41 individuals indicating that the school's social environment occasionally mirrors the structure and organization of their community. Additionally, 19 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feels that the school's social environment frequently reflects their community's structure.

Furthermore, 18 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent alignment between the school's social environment and their community's structure. A smaller number, 8 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that the school's social environment consistently reflects their community. Finally, 8 individuals selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that the school's social environment never mirrors the structure and organization of their community.
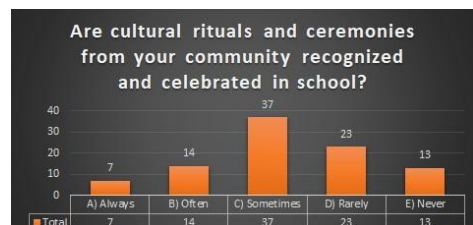

Figure 9 Recognition and Celebration of Cultural Rituals and Ceremonies in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 9 represents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding the recognition and celebration of cultural rituals and ceremonies from their community in school. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 37 individuals indicating that these cultural rituals and ceremonies are occasionally recognized and celebrated in the school. Additionally, 23 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feel that these cultural practices are frequently incorporated.

Furthermore, 14 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent recognition and celebration of cultural rituals and ceremonies in the school.

A smaller number, 7 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that cultural rituals and ceremonies are consistently recognized and celebrated. Finally, 13 individuals selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that the school never acknowledges or celebrates cultural rituals and ceremonies from their community.
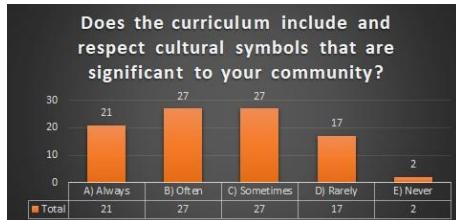

Figure 10 Inclusion and Respect of Significant Cultural Symbols in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 10 illustrates responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether the curriculum includes and respects cultural symbols significant to their community. Among the respondents, the most common response is "Often," with 27 individuals indicating that cultural symbols are frequently included and respected in the curriculum. Additionally, another 27 respondents chose "Sometimes," suggesting that an equally significant portion of participants feels that these symbols are incorporated periodically.

Furthermore, 21 participants selected "Rarely," signifying a group that perceives infrequent recognition of cultural symbols in the curriculum. A smaller number, 17 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that cultural symbols are consistently integrated and respected. Finally, only 2 individuals selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that the curriculum never acknowledges or respects cultural symbols significant to their community.
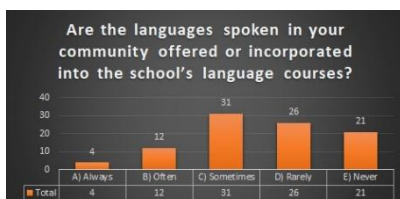

Figure 11 Incorporation of the Local Languages in the Language Courses of the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 11 presents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding the incorporation of languages spoken in their community into the school's language courses. The most prevalent response is "Sometimes," with 31 individuals indicating that these languages are occasionally offered or incorporated. Additionally, 26 respondents selected "Rarely," signifying that a significant portion of participants perceives infrequent inclusion. "Often" received 12 responses, suggesting a notable but smaller group of individuals believe that their community's languages are frequently part of school language courses. Only 4 individuals chose "Always," indicating a minority who perceive consistent inclusion, while 21 participants selected "Never," implying that a substantial portion feels that their community's languages are never integrated into school language courses.
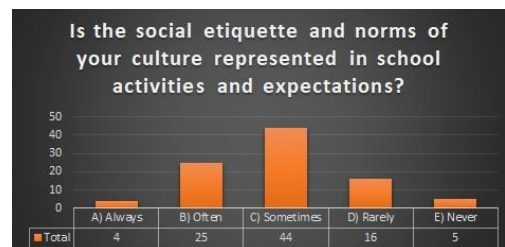

Figure 12 Representation of the Local Culture's Social Etiquette and Norms in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 12 depicts responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding the representation of their culture's social etiquette and norms in school activities and expectations. Among the participants, the most common response is "Sometimes," with 44 individuals expressing that their culture's norms are occasionally represented. Additionally, 25 respondents believe that their culture's social etiquette and norms are often integrated into school activities and expectations. A minority of 4 individuals indicated "Always," suggesting that few perceive consistent representation, while 16 respondents selected "Rarely," indicating infrequent alignment. Lastly, 5 participants felt that their culture's social etiquette and norms are never reflected in school activities and expectations.
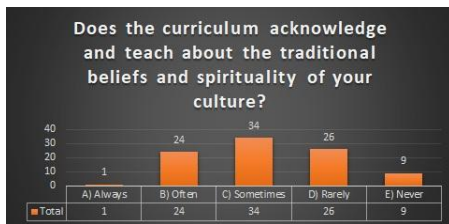
Figure 13 Acknowledgement and Teaching of the Local Traditional Beliefs and Spirituality in the School Curriculum

The bar graph in Figure 13 represents responses from a total of 94 individuals regarding whether the curriculum acknowledges and teaches about the traditional beliefs and spirituality of their culture. The most common response is "Sometimes," with 34 individuals indicating that the curriculum occasionally acknowledges and teaches about these aspects of their culture. Additionally, 26 respondents chose "Often," suggesting a significant portion of participants feels that these traditional beliefs and spirituality are frequently integrated into the curriculum.

Furthermore, 24 participants selected "Rarely," indicating a group that perceives infrequent acknowledgment and teaching of these beliefs and spirituality in the curriculum. A smaller number, 9 individuals, indicated "Always," implying that some feel that the curriculum consistently acknowledges and teaches about these aspects of their culture. Finally, 1 individual selected "Never," indicating a minority who believe that the curriculum never includes or teaches about traditional beliefs and spirituality in their culture.
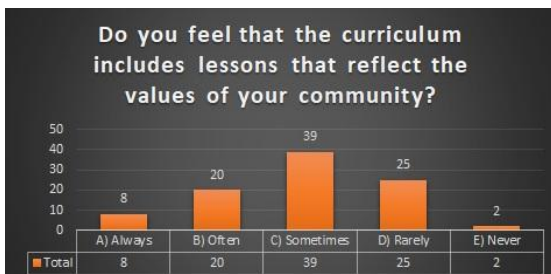

Figure 14 Alignment of the School Curriculum with the Community Values

The bar graph in Figure 14 represents responses from a total of 94 individuals to the question about the curriculum's alignment with community values. Among the participants, 39 individuals (the highest count) indicated that they sometimes felt the curriculum reflected their community's values. Additionally, 25 respondents often perceived this alignment. On the other hand, 8 participants always felt that the curriculum reflected their community values, while 20 individuals rarely felt this connection. A minority of 2 respondents stated that the curriculum never aligned with their community's values. Overall, the data indicates a range of perceptions among participants, with the majority falling into the "Sometimes" and "Often" categories.

Findings

The findings of the study, based on responses to the provided questions, reveal various insights into how individuals perceive the alignment of their cultural values, traditions, and practices with their school's curriculum and environment.

1. Firstly, when it comes to the reflection of community values in the curriculum, the most common response is that it "Sometimes" includes lessons that reflect these values, indicating a degree of alignment but with room for improvement. A smaller proportion of respondents feel that their community values are "Often" integrated into the curriculum, suggesting a relatively positive perception of alignment.

2. Secondly, regarding the acknowledgment and teaching of traditional beliefs and spirituality, responses also indicate a mixed picture. The majority feel that their curriculum "Sometimes" addresses these aspects, with fewer respondents indicating that it "Often" includes such teachings.

3. Concerning the representation of social etiquette and norms, most respondents believe that these are "Sometimes" reflected in school activities and expectations, while a minority feels they are "Often" represented.

4. When it comes to incorporating community languages into school language courses, the majority feel that it

is done "Sometimes," suggesting room for more consistent inclusion.

5. Cultural symbols significant to the community are perceived to be "Sometimes" included and respected in the curriculum, with a smaller portion feeling that they are "Often" incorporated.

6. Regarding cultural rituals and ceremonies, most respondents believe that they are "Sometimes" recognized and celebrated in school, while a minority sees this as happening "Often."

7. The alignment of the school's social environment with the structure of the community is perceived to happen "Sometimes" by the majority, with fewer respondents feeling it occurs "Often."

8. The study also suggests that the teaching of local economy and traditional livelihoods is perceived to occur "Sometimes" in the curriculum, with fewer respondents indicating "Often."

9. Political systems and governance of the community are perceived to be "Sometimes" discussed or explored in history or social studies classes, with a smaller proportion indicating "Often."

10. The study indicates that the study or creation of traditional art from the culture is perceived as happening "Sometimes" or "Often" by a majority of respondents.

11. The teaching and respect for cultural customs and traditions within the school setting is seen as occurring "Sometimes" by most respondents, with fewer indicating "Often."

12. Regarding the alignment of the educational approach with cultural values and practices, most respondents believe it happens "Sometimes," with fewer indicating "Often."

13. The use or study of technologies and materials from cultural heritage is perceived to occur "Sometimes" or "Often" by most respondents.

14. Finally, the encouragement or mirroring of cultural attitudes and behaviors in the school's curriculum is perceived to happen "Sometimes" by most, with a smaller portion indicating "Often."

In summary, the findings suggest that there is often a perception of only occasional alignment between the school environment and curriculum with the cultural values and practices of the community, with room for improvement in terms of more consistent and frequent incorporation. In almost all the cases, the respondents gave their statement in the non-affirmative response to the research questions.

Conclusion

Being a state with more language and cultural diversity than any other ethnic group or states in India, an educational policy incorporating the rich and diverse cultural heritage and practices of the people will go a long way in bridging the cultural divide in education of the Nagas from the rest of India. It is observed that the lack of parity in the educational content and access and the indifference to the cultural backgrounds of learners leads to compromised achievement and engagement among students from diverse cultures. The research suggests that policy implementations of Nagaland focused on the inclusiveness and reflection of the cultural backgrounds of its learners in the educational content of the state will reign in effective learning and academic success.To bridge the cultural divide in education from the rest of the country, students' cultural heritages need to be acknowledged in the teaching practices of the state institutions. Moreover, the growing recognition of the need to diversify educational content needs to be incorporated in the state's educational policy recommendation. In today's technology-driven learning world, along with cultural divide, digital divide also needs the attention of policy makers to ensure the opportunity of access to educational content. In conclusion, to efficiently address both the cultural and educational content divides, it is necessary for educational policies and practices to be informed by a deep understanding of cultural diversity and to actively seek to close gaps in both representation and access.

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