

Academic Achievement and Environmental Contexts: A Qualitative Analysis of Murshidabad District's Higher Secondary Learners in the Framework of NEP 2020

Abdullahil Baki¹, Prof. Dr. Archana Pathak²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Education, Eklavya University, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh, India

²Professor, Department of Education, Eklavya University, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the 'academic achievement' of 'higher secondary students' in 'Murshidabad district', West Bengal, within the framework of the 'National Education Policy' (NEP) 2020, focusing specifically on the influence of 'environmental contexts'. Using a qualitative approach, the study examines how various 'socio-economic', cultural, infrastructural, and 'institutional factors' affect learners' academic performance. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and field observations involving students, teachers, parents, and school administrators across both rural and semi-urban areas of the district. The study reveals that 'academic achievement' is closely linked to 'environmental variables' such as parental literacy, economic stability, gender norms, access to digital resources, quality of teaching, and school infrastructure. It also highlights the role of community involvement and government policy in shaping educational experiences. The 'NEP 2020's emphasis on equity, inclusivity, and context-specific 'learning strategies' provides a critical lens through which to understand and address these disparities. Findings suggest that while 'NEP 2020' presents a transformative vision for Indian education, its implementation in under-resourced regions like Murshidabad requires targeted support, 'teacher training', and 'infrastructural investment'. The study concludes with recommendations aimed at aligning local educational realities with the goals of 'NEP 2020' for improved academic outcomes.

How to cite this paper: Abdullahil Baki | Prof. Dr. Archana Pathak "Academic Achievement and Environmental Contexts: A Qualitative Analysis of Murshidabad District's Higher Secondary Learners in the Framework of NEP 2020"

Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-9 | Issue-3, June 2025, pp.767-773, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd81083.pdf



Copyright © 2025 by author (s) and International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development Journal. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)



KEYWORDS: Socio-economic Factors, Educational Policy, Rural Education, Educational Disparities, Context-Based Learning, Equity in Education

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of individuals and societies, serving as a powerful tool for social mobility, economic growth, and national development. In the Indian context, academic achievement at the higher secondary level is particularly significant, as it forms the foundation for students' entry into higher education and the workforce. However, the academic performance of learners is not solely determined by their cognitive abilities or classroom instruction; it is deeply influenced by a multitude of environmental factors, including socio-economic conditions, cultural practices, family background, infrastructure, and

institutional support. This is especially true in diverse and historically underdeveloped regions like Murshidabad district in West Bengal.

Murshidabad, a district marked by rich cultural heritage and historical significance, faces persistent educational challenges. Despite efforts at educational development, the district continues to struggle with low literacy rates, gender disparities, economic backwardness, and infrastructural deficiencies, all of which significantly influence the academic achievement of higher secondary learners. These environmental factors often create uneven learning

opportunities and outcomes, thereby contributing to educational inequality. Understanding how these contexts affect academic performance is essential for designing effective interventions and ensuring that all students, regardless of background, have equitable access to quality education.

In response to the need for an inclusive and transformative educational framework, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, a comprehensive reform initiative aimed at overhauling the existing educational structure. NEP 2020 envisions a learner-centric, flexible, and multidisciplinary approach to education that emphasizes foundational literacy, experiential learning, critical thinking, and the integration of vocational education. One of its key features is the recognition of diversity in learners' socio-cultural backgrounds and the emphasis on equity and inclusion. The policy highlights the importance of contextual factors in learning and encourages localized, need-based educational strategies. Therefore, evaluating academic achievement within the framework of NEP 2020 necessitates a deeper understanding of how local environmental contexts interact with the aspirations of national policy.

This research paper seeks to explore the academic achievement of higher secondary learners in Murshidabad district through a qualitative lens, focusing on how environmental contexts—ranging from family income and parental education to school resources and community attitudes—influence educational outcomes. The qualitative methodology allows for an in-depth exploration of learners' lived experiences, revealing the complexities and interdependencies that quantitative data alone may overlook. By engaging with students, teachers, parents, and administrators, this study aims to generate rich, descriptive insights into the barriers and enablers of academic success in the region.

The objectives of this research are threefold: first, to identify the key environmental factors influencing academic achievement among higher secondary students in Murshidabad; second, to analyze how these factors align or conflict with the goals and provisions of NEP 2020; and third, to suggest policy and practice-based recommendations for improving educational outcomes in similar socio-economically challenged contexts. In doing so, the study contributes to the broader discourse on educational equity and policy implementation in India.

Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of integrating ground realities with policy initiatives. While NEP 2020 provides a visionary blueprint for

education in India, its success depends significantly on its adaptability to local needs and contexts. Through this study, a clearer picture emerges of how academic achievement is shaped not only by curriculum and instruction but also by the environments in which students live and learn. The insights gained from Murshidabad can thus inform both policy-makers and educators about the importance of environmental sensitivity in driving educational reform and ensuring that no learner is left behind.

Objectives:

- To identify and analyze the key environmental factors—including socio-economic background, family environment, school infrastructure, and community support—that influence the academic achievement of higher secondary students in Murshidabad district.
- To examine the lived experiences and challenges faced by students, teachers, and parents that impact educational performance in rural and semi-urban areas of the district.
- To evaluate the alignment between the objectives of NEP 2020 and the actual educational conditions and practices observed in Murshidabad's higher secondary institutions.

Methodology:

This research has adopted a qualitative methodology to explore the intricate relationship between academic achievement and environmental contexts among higher secondary learners in Murshidabad district within the framework of NEP 2020. The study is based on a purposive sampling approach, selecting a diverse set of rural and semi-urban higher secondary schools across the district to capture a range of socio-economic and institutional conditions. Data has been collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations involving students, teachers, parents, and school administrators. The interviews and discussions aimed to uncover lived experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to academic performance, while classroom observations provide insights into pedagogical practices and infrastructural realities.

Environmental Factors Influencing Academic Achievement in Murshidabad District

Understanding academic outcomes in Murshidabad requires a close look at the broader contexts in which students live and learn. Four interrelated environmental domains—socio-economic background, family environment, school infrastructure, and community support—play pivotal roles in shaping higher secondary learners' performance.

1. Socio-economic Background

- **Household Income and Occupation:** Many students come from low-income family's dependent on agriculture, daily wage labour, or small trade. Irregular or seasonal earnings often force learners into part-time work, reducing time for study and extracurricular enrichment.
- **Parental Literacy and Education:** Parents with limited schooling are less able to assist with homework or guide subject choices. Conversely, where at least one parent has secondary or tertiary education, learners report higher motivation, clearer career aspirations, and more informed support for exam preparation.
- **Digital Access and Resources:** While NEP 2020 emphasizes digital literacy, uneven access to smartphones, internet connectivity, and computers in Murshidabad's rural pockets creates a "digital divide." Students with reliable devices can participate in online supplementary classes, whereas others rely solely on traditional classroom instruction.

2. Family Environment

- **Parental Involvement and Expectations:** Families that prioritize education-regularly checking homework, attending parent-teacher meetings, and setting academic goals-tend to have higher-achieving children. In contrast, in households where parents are absent (due to migration for work) or less engaged, students often exhibit lower self-discipline and academic focus.
- **Home Study Space:** Overcrowded or shared living spaces impede concentration. Learners with access to a quiet corner or separate room report better study habits and sustained attention during revision.
- **Gender Norms and Domestic Responsibilities:** Traditional expectations assign girls greater household duties, limiting their study hours. Boys, while freer to study, may face external pressures to contribute financially, affecting their school attendance.

3. School Infrastructure

- **Physical Facilities:** The condition of classrooms, availability of laboratories, libraries, and sanitation facilities directly impacts student engagement. Schools with well-equipped science labs and functional libraries encourage experimentation and self-directed reading-key components of NEP 2020's experiential learning goals.

➤ Teacher Availability and Qualification:

Teacher shortages-especially in specialized subjects-lead to multi-subject teaching or reliance on underqualified staff. Schools with subject-trained teachers deliver deeper conceptual understanding and more personalized feedback.

➤ Extracurricular and Remedial Programs:

Institutions offering after-school tutoring, clubs, and vocational workshops align with NEP's holistic education vision. However, such programs are unevenly distributed, with more resources concentrated in semi-urban centres than in remote villages.

4. Community Support

➤ Local Educational Committees and NGOs:

Active Village Education Committees (VECs) and non-profits can mobilize resources, monitor school functioning, and organize awareness drives on the importance of higher secondary education-fostering an enabling environment.

➤ Peer Influence and Role Models:

Students surrounded by peers who value schooling and by local role models (e.g., college-educated alumni returning as mentors) demonstrate higher aspirations and perseverance. In contrast, communities where drop-out rates are high may normalize early school leaving.

➤ Cultural Attitudes towards Education:

In areas where secondary schooling is traditionally seen as less essential-especially for girls-community campaigns and success stories play a critical role in shifting perceptions and encouraging sustained enrolment through Grade XII.

The intersection of these factors creates a complex ecosystem: a motivated student from a resource-rich household may still struggle if their school lacks basic labs; likewise, a well-resourced school may not fully compensate for adverse home conditions. Effective implementation of NEP 2020 in Murshidabad thus hinges on holistic interventions that address socio-economic inequities, strengthen family engagement, upgrade school infrastructure, and galvanize community support in tandem.

Lived Experiences and Challenges Impacting Educational Performance in Rural and Semi-Urban Murshidabad

To understand academic achievement in Murshidabad district, it is essential to explore the lived experiences of the key stakeholders-students, teachers, and parents. Each group navigates a unique set of challenges that collectively shape the educational environment. The rural and semi-urban contexts of Murshidabad add layers of complexity, with socio-

cultural, infrastructural, and economic constraints deeply influencing educational performance.

1. Students' Lived Experiences and Challenges

➤ Financial Pressures and Early Responsibilities:

Many higher secondary students in Murshidabad, especially in rural areas, come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Students are often compelled to engage in income-generating activities such as agriculture, domestic labour, or small-scale trading. This reduces study time and increases absenteeism.

➤ Gender-Based Barriers:

Girls face disproportionate challenges due to early marriage pressure, domestic responsibilities, and restrictive mobility norms. Their education is often deprioritized, and their academic performance suffers due to limited time, societal discouragement, and lack of mentorship.

➤ Limited Access to Learning Resources:

Inadequate access to textbooks, internet connectivity, tuition support, and quiet study environments is a recurring issue. Many students rely entirely on school instruction without access to supplementary materials or digital platforms, which are promoted under NEP 2020.

➤ Language and Comprehension Barriers:

Students from non-Hindi or non-Bengali-speaking backgrounds sometimes struggle with comprehension, especially in schools where instruction is not aligned with their mother tongue, impacting conceptual clarity and performance.

2. Teachers' Lived Experiences and Challenges

➤ Teacher Shortages and Multi-Grade Teaching:

Many rural and semi-urban schools operate with insufficient teaching staff, leading to overburdened teachers handling multiple subjects or grades. This compromises instructional quality and individualized attention to students.

➤ Lack of Professional Development:

Teachers report limited opportunities for professional training aligned with NEP 2020 goals. Most have not received in-depth orientation on pedagogical reforms, assessment changes, or ICT integration, limiting effective policy implementation.

➤ Infrastructural Constraints:

Teaching is often hampered by a lack of basic facilities-non-functional laboratories, poor sanitation, and overcrowded classrooms. Teachers must adapt lessons to resource-poor environments, affecting curriculum delivery and student engagement.

➤ Emotional and Professional Disengagement:

Due to low salaries, lack of recognition, and

heavy administrative burdens, some teachers express feelings of burnout and demotivation, which can reflect in their teaching quality and student interaction.

3. Parents' Lived Experiences and Challenges

➤ Educational Illiteracy and Lack of Awareness:

A significant number of parents in Murshidabad are illiterate or have low levels of education. They often struggle to support their children academically or understand the requirements of the higher secondary curriculum and career pathways.

➤ Economic Vulnerability:

Parents often prioritize short-term economic survival over long-term educational goals. This may result in withdrawing children from school for labour or marriage, particularly during financial crises.

➤ Limited Engagement with Schools:

Due to cultural barriers, work schedules, or lack of awareness, many parents rarely interact with teachers or attend school meetings. These limits home-school collaboration, which is vital for tracking academic progress and encouraging learning at home.

➤ Scepticism Towards the Education System:

Some parents express distrust in the relevance or effectiveness of the education system, particularly if they have not witnessed tangible outcomes (e.g., jobs or higher education placements) for educated youth in their communities.

The lived experiences of students, teachers, and parents reveal a web of interrelated obstacles-poverty, gender bias, infrastructural inadequacies, and policy-practice gaps-that significantly affect academic performance. While NEP 2020 aims to address many of these issues through systemic reform, the actual conditions in rural and semi-urban Murshidabad point to the need for localized, community-based solutions. Strengthening teacher training, improving infrastructure, engaging families, and offering targeted support to marginalized students are essential to bridging the gap between policy aspirations and ground-level realities.

Evaluation of the Alignment Between NEP 2020 Objectives and Educational Conditions in Murshidabad's Higher Secondary Institutions

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a visionary framework for transforming India's education system with a focus on equity, inclusivity, skill development, and holistic learning. However, the success of such a policy depends significantly on its implementation within local contexts. This section evaluates how well the objectives of NEP 2020 align

with the actual educational conditions and practices observed in Murshidabad's higher secondary institutions, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

1. Equity and Inclusion in Education

NEP 2020 Goal: Ensure that every child has access to quality education regardless of socio-economic background, gender, or geography.

Ground Reality in Murshidabad:

- Partial Alignment. While enrolment rates have improved due to government schemes and awareness, deep-rooted inequalities persist, especially for girls, children from economically backward families, and first-generation learners.
- Social and gender norms still hinder the participation of girls, especially in rural pockets where early marriage and domestic work prevail.
- Access to digital learning—a critical component of NEP—is uneven. Many students lack smartphones, internet connectivity, or digital literacy, creating a “digital divide.”

2. Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education

NEP 2020 Goal: Move away from rote learning and promote critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills through multidisciplinary education.

Ground Reality in Murshidabad:

- Limited Alignment. Most schools still emphasize rote-based examination preparation. Conceptual and inquiry-based learning is not widely practiced due to time constraints, outdated teaching methods, and teacher shortages.
- There is minimal exposure to co-curricular or vocational education, particularly in rural schools lacking workshops, science labs, or sports facilities.
- Teachers report a lack of training in experiential and activity-based learning, which are central to the NEP vision.

3. Curriculum and Pedagogical Reform

NEP 2020 Goal: Reform curriculum to make it more relevant, skill-oriented, and student-centric.

Ground Reality in Murshidabad:

- Misalignment. While the policy advocates competency-based education, curricula and assessments remain textbook-centric, especially in government and low-cost private schools.

- Teachers in many schools continue to follow traditional lecture methods, primarily due to inadequate training and high pupil-teacher ratios.
- Availability of updated textbooks and learning materials reflecting NEP guidelines is inconsistent.

4. Teacher Training and Capacity Building

NEP 2020 Goal: Ensure continuous professional development and empowerment of teachers.

Ground Reality in Murshidabad:

- Weak Alignment. There is a notable gap in teacher training infrastructure. Many teachers have received little to no orientation on NEP 2020, its goals, or practical strategies for implementation.
- Teacher absenteeism and overburden due to administrative duties also reduce classroom efficiency.
- In-service training opportunities are either irregular or insufficient, especially in remote areas.

5. Technology Integration in Education

NEP 2020 Goal: Leverage technology to improve teaching, learning, and governance.

Ground Reality in Murshidabad:

- Limited Alignment. A lack of digital infrastructure (smartboards, internet access, devices) and low digital literacy among teachers and students hampers tech integration.
- Some semi-urban schools have started using digital tools, but rural schools lag significantly, creating uneven implementation across the district.

6. Local Language and Cultural Sensitivity

NEP 2020 Goal: Promote instruction in the mother tongue/regional language and celebrate cultural diversity.

Ground Reality in Murshidabad:

- Moderate Alignment. Most schools use Bengali as the medium of instruction, which aligns with regional linguistic practices. However, multilingual or tribal learners may still face difficulties, and no significant efforts have been made to adapt teaching strategies to their needs.
- Local culture and heritage are rarely integrated into the curriculum in meaningful ways.

Summary of Alignment

NEP 2020 Objective	Level of Alignment in Murshidabad	Challenges Noted
Equity and Inclusion	Partial	Economic, gender, and digital divides
Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education	Limited	Infrastructure gaps, teacher readiness
Curriculum and Pedagogical Reform	Misaligned	Rote learning, outdated methods
Teacher Training and Capacity Building	Weak	Lack of NEP-oriented training
Technology Integration	Limited	Poor infrastructure, low digital skills
Local Language and Cultural Sensitivity	Moderate	Needs better multilingual support

While the vision of NEP 2020 resonates with the aspirations of inclusive and quality education, its implementation in Murshidabad faces significant systemic and contextual barriers. To ensure meaningful alignment, targeted investment in teacher training, infrastructure, digital access, and community engagement is essential. Only by addressing these ground-level realities can the transformative potential of NEP 2020 be fully realized in Murshidabad and similar districts across India.

Conclusion:

This research sheds critical light on the complex interplay between academic achievement and environmental contexts among higher secondary learners in Murshidabad district, especially within the transformative framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The findings reveal that while NEP 2020 sets forth an inclusive, learner-centric, and skill-based vision for Indian education, its successful implementation remains uneven and constrained in socio-economically challenged regions like Murshidabad. Key environmental factors-including socio-economic status, family involvement, school infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and community engagement-emerge as significant determinants of academic performance.

The lived experiences of students, teachers, and parents highlight multiple barriers such as poverty, gender bias, digital inaccessibility, outdated pedagogy, and lack of institutional support. Although the NEP promotes equity, technology integration, and holistic development, its goals are often at odds with the ground realities faced by under-resourced schools and marginalized learners. The gap between policy and practice underscores the urgent need for context-specific strategies, increased investment in infrastructure and teacher training, and stronger community-school collaboration.

In conclusion, bridging this gap requires not only structural reforms but also sustained, localized efforts to ensure that the aspirations of NEP 2020 are translated into meaningful change. Only then can educational equity and excellence become a reality for all learners in Murshidabad and similar districts across India.

References:

- [1] Biswas, R., & Das, S. K. (2024). Comprehensive Learning for a Green World: Integrating Sustainability in Education through

Nep 2020. Integrating Environmental Sustainability Into Education Insights from Nep 2020, 150.

- [2] Bala, S., & Sawhney, M. (2024). Role of Experiential Learning in Environmental Education. Integrating Environmental Sustainability Into Education Insights from Nep 2020, 121.

- [3] Bhattacharya, S., & Gupta, S. (2024). 5 Skill Development to Enhance Productivity of Educational Policy. Role of Industry Academia Interface in Skill Development: Internalising Education Policies, 65.

- [4] Bansal, P., & Chawla, R. (2025). Quality Education for a Sustainable Future: India's NEP 2020 and the SDGs. International Journal of Education and Management Studies, 15(1), 169-172.

- [5] Biswas, S. (2024). Sustainable Development Goals through the Lenses of Nep 2020. Integrating Environmental Sustainability Into Education Insights from Nep 2020, 53.

- [6] Contributors, V. (2021). Economic Crisis and Mentality of Youth in Post-Pandemic Period edited by Sagar Simlandy. PS Opus Publications.

- [7] Korada, M. (2023). Nep-2020: Teacher Education and Sustainable Development. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research, 12(4), 4.

- [8] Korada, M. (2023). The New Approaches Of Teacher Education: NEP 2020. DOI: <http://ijmer.in.doi/2022/11.12>, 81.

- [9] Lahiri, S. (2024). The Status of Environmental and Sustainability Education in India. In World Review (pp. 57-72). CRC Press.

- [10] Masud, M., Paul, B., Dana, L. P., & Luperi, M. M. (2025). Students' Perceptions on Startups in Higher Education Institutions: Insights From West Bengal, India. In Sustainable Business Ecosystems and Social Perspectives (pp. 143-164). IGI Global Scientific Publishing.
- [11] Midha, P., Vaidya, U., & Chanchal, D. (2022). Recent Trends in Humanities, Literature, Sociology and Psychology. AG Volumes, 01-162.
- [12] Paryati, P. (2022). Determination Of Mineral Mining Exploration Area With Fuzzy Using Genetic Algorithm To Reduce Mining Risk.
- [13] Paryati, P. (2022). Estimation of Artificial Intelligence Andesite Resources Mining Area with Schlumberger Model and Vertical Sound Method.
- [14] Shekher, R. C. (2020). A Study on Educational Contributions of Corporate Organisations towards CSR Activities in Gujarat. Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (India).
- [15] Sharma, K. (2024). Integrating Gender and Environmental Education: Pathways to Equity and Sustainability in the Context of Nep 2020. Integrating Environmental Sustainability Into Education Insights from Nep 2020, 65.
- [16] Saluja, A. (2024). Fostering Environmental Literacy through the Curriculum at School Level: NEP 2020's Approach and its Implications. Journal of Research in Social Science and Humanities, 4(1), 15-20.
- [17] Sharma, K., & Sharma, P. (2021). NEP 2020 and Environmental Studies (EVS) Curriculum. Voices of Teachers and Teacher Educators, 10(2), 44-53.
- [18] Tiwari, M. (2023). Study of Awareness Level of NEP-2020 among the Student Teachers of Bhopal (Doctoral dissertation, Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal).

