

Morung System of Education and NEP 2020: A Qualitative Study on Tribal Approaches to Childhood Education in Integrating Modern Solutions with Tradition

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Citation: Sunepinla, A., Limala., & Buno, Z. (2025). Morung System of Education and NEP 2020: A Qualitative Study on Tribal Approaches to Childhood Education in Integrating Modern Solutions with Tradition. *International Journal of Childhood Education*, 6(2), 13-27. <https://doi.org/10.33422/ijce.v6i2.1230>

ABSTRACT

In ancient Naga society, Morung was the formal institution for the Tribal people of Nagaland, India. In recent years, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has incorporated this concept by establishing Morung centres in Nagaland. Different civil societies come together to guide the Morung students both academically and to impart indigenous traditional values. This paper incorporates the objectives of SSA to guarantee inclusive and holistic education, in accordance with the National Education Policy 2020 and SDG 4. It also attempts to highlight the initiatives taken to integrate modern solutions with tradition, resulting in improved students' academic performance, increased retention rates, and reduced drop-outs.

keywords: Morung Centres, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Indigenous Education, NEP 2020, Holistic Education

1. Introduction

Nagaland is one of the states in the northeastern part of India (Kahmei, 2021). It comprises 17 administrative districts and is inhabited by 17 major tribes along with other sub-tribes, with each tribe possessing its unique character, distinguished by its own customs, languages and traditional attire (Government of Nagaland, 2025). Among their various customary traditions, the Morung system was one of the most prominent. The tradition and practice of the Morung dates back to a time before the advent of the British and American Missionaries (Longchar, 2017). The Morung, also known as the youth's dormitory, is a large building that prominently stands in a Naga village. It is adorned with intricate carvings depicting hornbills, tigers, bisons, and human heads. Sometimes, it also features barge-boards that resemble wings or horns. From a sociological perspective, the Morung holds significant importance in Naga society, although its significance may differ between different groups (Jacobs et al., 2012). In the past, the Morung served as a traditional institution of education, a guard house, a recreational centre, a military training centre, and a place of art and discipline, where young individuals also acquired knowledge about their ancestral practices (Kahmei, 2021; Zeliang, 2024). Thus, in the Morung, the young people learnt about the practices of their ancestors, religious practices, traditions, cultural values, dialects, folk songs, folk dances, folk tales, and many more.

The prominence and practice of Morung have been common in the Naga society since ancient times. However, its nomenclature and certain practices varied among the different Naga tribes.

Out of the 17 major Naga tribes, the present paper focuses on the Ao and Chang tribes, which are discussed below-

‘The Aos are a Naga ethnic group in the state of Nagaland’ (International Council of Naga Affairs, 2021). The Ao Naga tribe mainly occupies the Mokokchung district, which is one of the major districts in Nagaland. There are 88 recognised villages under the district (Government of Nagaland, n.d.). The literal concept of the Morung system, as practised by the Ao Naga tribe, was an ancient traditional learning institution for the young men of the Ao villages, commonly known as **Arju or Ariju** (male dormitory). It served as an establishment where the adolescent males of the community received training and acquired the essential skills needed for self-defence (Longkumer, 2021). The purpose of the Arju was to guard the community and train young males for any event, including warfare. Each boy learned through practice and experience. They also learned discipline, work ethic, honesty, and other skills. (Longkumer, 2021; Pongen, 2019).

The Chang Naga tribe is one of the sixteen officially recognised main tribes occupying the Tuensang district of eastern Nagaland (Imlangba, 2024). There are 131 villages in Tuensang district (Government of Nagaland, n.d.). Down the line, the Chang Naga tribe had its unique Morung practices, commonly called the **Sochum** (alternatively spelt as **Sochem**). It was a learning institution for the young boys and girls. A leader was assigned to each Sochum to monitor its functioning (Chingmak, 2020). Here, the members were taught and trained about their culture, customs, discipline, and lifestyle. Elders from the respective village also visited to narrate ancestral stories and impart knowledge on the plantation and cultivation of different crops. Chingmak (2020) also stated that it was customary for parents and elders to encourage young people, regardless of gender, to become members of the Sochum. In the Sochum, they followed a non-formal curriculum where the members learned about cultures, customs, moral values and societies.

In the present day, the Morung system has been reintroduced as Morung centres, under the initiative taken by Samagra Shiksha Nagaland. It is a non-formal type of institution where students gather to study their academic lessons and learn about moral values, social values, discipline, gender awareness and indigenous education, such as agriculture, horticulture, crafts, and assimilation of cultural perspectives through oral traditions about social institutions, practices, and beliefs (Samagra Shiksha Nagaland, n.d.). These learning activities take place under the guidance of their respective mentors or wardens, elders and distinguished members of the community. It is important to note that these centres were established in *rural and far-flung remote areas* where children have limited access to tuition or advanced learning resources. This is largely due to factors like remoteness of the area, poor socio-economic condition of the families, as well as scarcity of teachers in the villages.

2. NEP 2020 on Holistic Education

Education in any form equips an individual to withstand the realities of the world and become a contributing member of society. With numerous social developments and advancements over the years, modern society requires educated citizens who are equipped with 21st-century skills. As such, the introduction of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) in India came as a transformative saviour to the Indian Education system. Among many other things, the policy emphasises making education holistic for the students. As highlighted in the NEP 2020 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020, p.12), “The aim of education will not only be cognitive development but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the 21st-century skills”. It further iterated

that “In all stages, experiential learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy...” (p.12).

According to Patel (2024), one of the fundamental aspects of the NEP 2020 is its focus on skill-oriented education. The NEP 2020 emphasises that India's education system has traditionally focused on academic learning and thus necessitates a transition towards skill-based education to equip students for career opportunities. It aims to cultivate creativity, problem-solving, critical thinking, and communication abilities, which are crucial for the 21st century. Through real-world application and hands-on practice, skill-based learning fosters the development of students. For such purposes, specific skills are both taught and intuited through repeated situational exposure and demonstration.

3. A Background of the Morung Centres as Initiated by Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, Nagaland, India

The Morung was an important institution in ancient times, but over the years it has remained only as a cultural significance and is no longer actively practised. In recent years, however, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Nagaland has revived this tradition by establishing Morung centres in four districts: Longleng, Mokokchung, Phek, and Tuensang, to address the modern educational needs of village students (Samagra Shiksha Nagaland, n.d.). While the methods and approaches may differ from the traditional system, the underlying objective remains, i.e., to educate and nurture young minds. This study is delimited to the Ao Naga tribe under Mokokchung district and the Chang Naga tribe under Tuensang district, Nagaland, India.

The SSA scheme in India seeks to universalise access to school education, promote equity by including disadvantaged groups and weaker sections, and enhance the quality of education across all levels, from pre-primary to class XII (Press Information Bureau, 2021). In Nagaland, India, the scheme, in collaboration with various civil society organisations, initiated the implementation of the Morung system in rural areas to enhance students' academic learning and foster their skill development. (Samagra Shiksha Nagaland, n.d.). The SSA Nagaland has adopted the Morung system as part of its quality and innovative techniques initiated across India. Currently, with the assistance of SSA, the Morung centres in Nagaland work closely with parents, local schools, churches, and communities, who guide the students in their academic, spiritual, moral, and social development. This initiative has led to enhanced academic performance, increased retention rates, and reduced student drop-out rates. The Morung centres cater to children aged 4 to 15 years after school hours and during weekends. Here, students actively participate and learn Indigenous crafts and skills, cultivation, gardening, cultural values, and conservation of the environment. To oversee the Morung students, a tutor, warden, or mentor is assigned by the implementing agency (NGOs or social organisations managing the Morung centres in collaboration with SSA Nagaland). Orientation programmes or training camps are also organised for the Morung mentors or wardens by the implementing agents. Successful operation of the Morung centres and the continual enhancement of children's learning necessitate collaborative efforts from wardens/mentors, parents, schools, communities, and implementing agencies. The reformed Morung system is one of the significant achievements of SSA in Nagaland.

4. Objectives of the Study

- i.) To study the status of Morung centres in Nagaland.
- ii.) To highlight the activities organised in the Morung centres.
- iii.) To identify the involvement of different civil societies in the functioning of the Morung centres.

- iv.) To analyse the extent to which the Morung system of education aligns with the Holistic education envisaged in the NEP 2020.

5. Research Questions

- i.) What is the status of Morung Centres in Nagaland?
- ii.) What are the distinctive activities organised in the Morung centres?
- iii.) To what extent are the communities and civil societies involved in the functioning of the Morung centres?
- iv.) To what extent does the Morung system of education align with the Holistic education envisaged in the NEP 2020?

6. Review of Related Literature

The Samagra Shiksha Scheme aligns closely with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, aiming to ensure that all children have access to quality education within an equitable and inclusive classroom environment. This approach addresses their diverse backgrounds, multilingual requirements, and varying academic abilities, and fosters active participation in the learning process (Samagra Shiksha Scheme, n.d.). According to Kishore (2022), Samagra Shiksha will serve as a means to implement the recommendations of the NEP 2020. Through systematic planning and execution of targeted interventions, the scheme will facilitate the attainment of quality education for all within a specified timeframe and address existing challenges in the education sector. A decentralised planning exercise, focusing on measurable outcomes and active involvement of all stakeholders, is being carried out to ensure the scheme effectively achieves its goal.

In Tuensang district, the Eleuthorus Christian Society initiated the Sochum concept in 2006 . This initiative created centres for education and life skills in rural areas, serving as a valuable institution fostering education beyond the formal school system (Eleutheros Christian Society, n.d.). Following this, under the Quality intervention of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan Nagaland, Laaipang (a traditional youth dormitory in the Phom Naga tribe dialect) was introduced in Longleng district. As reported by Samagra Shiksha Nagaland (n.d.), the Laaipang aims to empower children by engaging them in various holistic educational activities, including literature, agriculture, horticulture, crafts, and gender awareness.

Other innovative practices under Samagra Shiksha include the 'UDDIPAN', meaning incitement or encouragement, which was inaugurated in Tripura state, India, in 2016. It is an innovative program that seeks to transform primary education by stimulating curiosity and interest in children. This effort was primarily implemented in 811 schools located in Educationally Backward Blocks and addresses comparatively weak learners by offering supplementary learning opportunities through peer group learning, activity-based learning, participatory learning, etc (Government of Tripura, 2017). Similarly, Samagra Shiksha Gujarat (n.d.) reported on the successful implementation of PRAGNA ('Pravrutti Dwara Gnan'), an experiential learning initiative executed with Early Grade children in standards 1 and 2 in Gujarat, where the classroom provides a child-friendly environment. Here, the resources are accessible, and individuals possess the autonomy to utilise these resources according to their requirements. The students are categorised into four groups based on their learning stage, namely, Teacher-Supported Group, Peer Support Group, Self-Learning Group and Evaluation Group.

At the national level, the Samagra Shiksha project encompasses all school education levels from pre-school to class XII, aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4 and the Right of

Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (Department of School Education & Literacy, 2023). Thus, Roy and Swargiary (2024) rightfully contended that the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan has substantially improved educational access throughout India, especially in rural and marginalised regions.

7. Methodology

7.1. Research Design

The present study employed a qualitative research design utilising a descriptive survey approach to explore the functioning of the Morung centres in depth. This design was chosen to provide a comprehensive and straightforward description of the participants' experiences and the operational dynamics within the Morung centres.

7.2. Tool

The study employed the following tools for data collection-

- i.) A checklist for the Morung students
- ii.) A semi-structured interview schedule to personally interview the Morung Mentors/Wardens, and
- iii.) An open-ended questionnaire for the implementing agents.

7.3. Sampling method

Purposive sampling was employed for this study. This method was considered appropriate due to the specific nature of the respondents and the accessibility of the study locations. Among the students, the senior members of the Morungs were purposively chosen to respond to the checklist, as they were expected to possess a more comprehensive understanding of the practices and experiences within the Morung centres compared to their junior counterparts. All the mentors/wardens of the Morung centres visited were included, as they directly oversee the functioning of the centres and could provide in-depth information. Both the implementing agencies of the two districts were selected since they play a central role in the execution of the program and were essential sources of data.

7.4. Analysis

The data analysis involved descriptive methods, including thematic coding for qualitative data and frequency analysis for checklist responses. Data triangulation was employed by cross-verifying responses obtained from the three different data collection tools.

8. Findings and Discussion of the Study

This section presents the findings of the study and discusses them in light of the research questions.

8.1. Research Question 1: Status of the Morung Centres Under Mokokchung and Tuensang Districts

The status of the Morung centres in Mokokchung and Tuensang districts varies depending on the functioning of the implementing agencies, the availability of resources, and the degree of involvement of civil societies. The overall status is presented under the following heads according to the districts –

Table 1. The Table Below Represents the Status of the Morung Centres in Mokokchung and Tuensang Districts

Name of Districts	Name of Implementing Agency	No of Existing Morung Centres	No. of Morung Centres Covered in the Present Study	Enrolment of Children in the Morung Centres	Enrolment of Morung Students in Schools (%)
Mokokchung	Ao Students Conference (AKM)	12	12	383	383 (100%)
Tuensang	Eleutheros Christian Society Tuensang (ECS)	13	10	413	371 (89.83%)

Note. Table 1 presents information on the districts covered- Mokokchung and Tuensang, Nagaland, India; the respective implementing agencies; the number of existing Morung Centres; the number of centres included in the present study; the enrolment of children in the Morung Centres; and the percentage of Morung students enrolled in schools. The findings presented in the table are discussed below.

8.1.1. Status of Arju Centres (Morung Centres) under Mokokchung District

The study found that the Arju centres (Morung centres) in Mokokchung district were established in 2022 with the Ao Students' Conference (AKM) as the implementing agency, which receives funds from the SSA for the expenses related to the centres. The AKM, then, appoints a 'Mentor' from each respective village for each centre. The mentors' responsibilities include providing academic guidance and tutoring, coordinating events for the Arju students, and maintaining records of all activities held at the centre. The mentors receive a monthly salary of ₹7000 from the AKM. The Arju sessions typically take place in village community halls or village schools. The centres offer a range of amenities, including laptops, solar lamps, table fans, drinking water, and learning resources such as maps, body parts charts, Hindi alphabet charts, pens, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, and exercise books. Sports gear like badminton rackets, shuttlecock, net, volleyball, and football are also available at the centres. All of these resources are supplied by the AKM.

According to Table 1, Mokokchung district has a total of 12 Morung centres, with the Ao Students Conference, the foremost body that represents Ao students, as the implementing agent. This study covered all 12 Morung centres comprehensively. From Table 1, it is evident that a total of 383 children were enrolled in the Morung centres at the time of the data collection. All 12 Morung centres in the Mokokchung area have reported a 100% enrollment rate of children in school.

8.1.2. Status of Sochum Centres (Morung Centres) Under Tuensang District

The Sochum project (Morung centres) in Tuensang district was started in 2006 by the Eleutheros Christian Society (ECS) with support from local communities and initially functioned independently. In 2017–18, it began receiving assistance from SSA Nagaland and is now implemented in collaboration with the Chang Baptist Lashong Thangyen, the Dolen Thangjam, and the community, all of whom share responsibilities for its operation.

The ECS appoints a 'Warden' to each Sochum centre from the respective village, whereby the wardens provide academic guidance to students, coordinate events, and maintain records of all Sochum-related activities. They are paid a salary of ₹7500 per month by the ECS, although in some centres, the wardens' salaries are sponsored by different civil societies, with some

sponsorships going up to ₹10,000. The ECS also allocates a monthly maintenance grant, ranging from ₹500 to ₹2000 per centre, depending on the number of students and the specific needs of each centre. The centres maintain a separate building consisting of one kitchen and one room for the warden, one study hall for the students and separate dormitories for the boys and girls. About 50% of the centres have received laptops/PCs from the implementing Agency. Some centres have also received televisions from their respective village government schools. In addition, the implementing agency supplies essentials like whiteboards, stationery, charts, etc. In some Morung centres, particularly those overseen by female wardens, female students receive education on menstruation and are provided with sanitary pads when needed.

As presented in Table 1, under Tuensang district, there are a total of 13 Morung centres, with the Eleutheros Christian Society Tuensang, a Non-Governmental Organisation, as the implementing agent. A total of 10 Morung centres were covered for this study. Table 1 also illustrates that there was a total of 413 children enrolled in the Morung centres, which were covered for this study. Out of the total 413 children, a number of 371 (89.83%) were enrolled in schools; the remaining children were yet to begin their schooling.

Based on the findings presented under subsection 8.1, it is learnt that the appointment of mentors and wardens creates employment opportunities for educated youth who are otherwise unemployed. Most importantly, this initiative benefits students and parents in rural areas where financial constraints often limit access to private tuition, making these centres a crucial educational resource. A key positive outcome of the Morung system is the noticeable improvement in academic performance, school enrollment, and retention rates. Additionally, the provision of essential materials such as stationery and electronic devices addresses a common challenge faced by rural families who often cannot afford such resources. The availability of televisions and laptops in some centres also helps bridge the gap by connecting children to the broader world beyond their villages. Active community involvement fosters a sense of belonging and collective responsibility, which supports children's holistic development. This community-based education model can serve as an effective blueprint for other regions looking to implement similar initiatives.

Furthermore, the Morung centres serve as both educational hubs and guardians of cultural heritage. By integrating modern education with traditional practices, they help preserve indigenous languages, customs, and values while supporting academic growth. This approach not only nurtures cultural pride and cultivates a sense of community but also creates meaningful opportunities for elders to share their wisdom with the younger generation. In this way, the Morung system bridges tradition with progress, offering a significant and sustainable model for preserving culture in today's educational settings.

8.2. Research Question 2: Activities Organised in the Morung Centres

The activities organised in both the Morung centres are discussed as follows:

8.2.1. Activities Organised in the Arju Centres Under Mokokchung District

The study found that a variety of activities were organised in the Arju centres led by the mentors. The main activities are discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Arju centres maintain a weekly routine comprising three weekdays and Saturdays. On weekdays, students gather at the centres for study after school hours, while Saturdays are reserved for cultural and co-curricular learning sessions.

The Arju centres organise skill-based activities such as handicrafts and other skills sessions on Saturdays. The skills taught include bamboo crafts, basket making, jewellery making, murha

making (handmade bamboo stool), papercrafts, and do-it-yourself crafts (DIYs). During free time, the mentors make use of the laptop to teach typing skills to the students.

Regarding social activities, the Arju students participate in social events like summer camps, visiting historical sites, and participating in church activities. The students are also involved in cultural activities. Occasionally, the Arju mentors organise culture-oriented events where community elders or members are invited as resource persons. During these sessions, the resource persons recount folktales and ancestral stories to the students. In addition, they are taught folk music and dances. These learning are translated into their active participation during cultural festivals through performances like cultural songs, dances and plays. Additionally, in some centres, especially those with playgrounds, children with great interest and active participation in school sports were found utilising the available sports gear.

Thus, the Arju centres are serving as significant learning institutions for the village students under Mokokchung district, improving not only their academic performance but also helping them develop socially, culturally, physically, morally and spiritually.

8.2.2. Activities Organised in Sochum Centres under Tuensang District

The study gathered that a student-friendly routine is maintained in the Sochum centres along with a variety of activities led by the wardens. The main activities of the centres are discussed in the following paragraphs.

In general, the daily routine in the Sochum centres consists of waking up at 5:00 am, spending approximately 30 minutes on personal hygiene, dedicating an hour to studying, and then returning to their respective homes for breakfast before heading to school. After school, they return to the Sochum at about 4:00 pm and then engage in fellowship from 4:30 to 5:00 pm. The designated period for studying is once again scheduled from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm, after which bedtime commences at 10:00 pm. After the study hour, certain Sochum Centres organise storytelling sessions or fellowships. Daily chores like cleaning the Sochum surroundings, tidying their beds, etc, are practised to imbibe values among the students. Co-curricular and cultural activities are observed on Saturdays and holidays. On Sundays or other holidays, some Sochums observe screen time by allowing the children to watch educational animal videos or Christian movies on television. The students are also taught moral values, cultural values, ethics, gender sensitivity, etc.

Skill-based activities are organised at the Sochum centres. Here, the students are taught handicraft skills such as bamboo cup and basket making, wooden spoon carving, embroidery, knitting, weaving, paper crafts, and painting. Another key feature of the centres is the teaching of farming skills, whereby they engage in activities such as gardening, farming, and maintaining kitchen gardens, which help in fostering the dignity of labour among the students. Majority of the centres have a kitchen garden either within or in close proximity to their respective Sochum buildings. In addition, they maintain farms dedicated to cultivating potatoes, bananas, and a range of seasonal vegetables such as ginger, maize, cabbage, and beans. The income generated from the sale of the vegetables and handicraft products is utilised to support the maintenance of their respective Sochums; while in some centres, the sale proceeds are used to sponsor picnics for the students.

Literary activities such as quizzes, painting, essay competitions, and environment day are organised. Most importantly, cultural activities such as cultural day, talent night, and morung night are organised to educate students about folk music, dances & drama, display traditional attire, and engage in storytelling. During such events, the Sochum students are also provided refreshments.

The Sochum students are actively engaged in social and spiritual activities. They participate in festivals and church programs, engage in pulpit exchange programs with other centres twice or thrice a year, and have regular fellowship at their respective centres. Additional thrilling extravaganza activities comprise picnics, camping, field trips, and tiffin exchanges.

With regard to sports and physical activities, the majority of the Sochum students are reported to be active in sports at their respective schools. Some students even represented their schools in inter-district level sports competitions. One particular Sochum also reported that they give firearm handling training to their boys. For this purpose, they use wooden carved rifle lookalikes in which one cannot load bullets. The reason for such training is to equip the boys with the ability to protect the village in case of any sudden attacks from outsiders. This has been a tradition followed in their village.

Thus, the Sochum centres play a prominent role in the lives of the village students. Enrolling in the Sochum has significantly improved their academic achievements, even scoring distinctions and securing the top positions in the Primary School Leaving Certificate within the district. Most importantly, the students are also developing well in their physical, social, cultural, moral and spiritual aspects.

As shown in the findings of subsection **8.2**, the diverse activities organised at the Arju and Sochum centres provide much more than academic support; they nurture holistic growth in students. Through skill-building sessions such as handicrafts, typing, and farming, children gain practical abilities that can enhance their future livelihoods. Cultural programs involving folk music, dances, and storytelling strengthen their connection to community traditions, fostering pride and continuity of heritage. Social and spiritual activities help instil values, ethics, and a sense of belonging, essential for well-rounded development. The centres' structured routines and extracurricular engagements also encourage discipline and teamwork. Importantly, these centres create safe, supportive spaces where students can thrive physically, emotionally, and intellectually, addressing gaps often seen in rural education. By integrating education with cultural preservation and life skills, these initiatives offer a sustainable model for empowering young learners and community resilience.

8.3. Research Question 3: Involvement of the Community in the Functioning of the Morung Centres

Community involvement in the Morung centres plays a major role in boosting the morale of the students and wardens/mentors. It is a crucial backbone for the successful operation of the Morung.

8.3.1. Involvement of the Community in the Arju Centres Under Mokokchung District

Community leaders, elders and members are invited to the Arju centres during the weekends to teach handicrafts and skills such as basket making, dao making, stone painting, knitting, etc. to the young Arju students. They also teach folk dances and songs and narrate folk stories to the students. The student unions of the respective villages also allow the Arju students to make use of the students' union library.

8.3.2. Involvement of the Community in the Sochum Centres Under Tuensang District

The community and different civil societies, such as parents, village government schools, community leaders and members, churches, and student unions, contribute significantly towards the running and functioning of the Sochum centres under the Tuensang district. They contribute in terms of cash (donations), food items and various basic facilities like water filters,

cups, clocks, light bulbs, inverters, solar lamps and panels, dustbins, soaps, blankets, bedsheets, curtains, television, stationery, furniture and timber for the Sochum building. Parents and community members also helped in constructing the Sochum building and furniture like beds, benches and study tables. They also donate vegetables and rice to the Morung wardens and for the students' occasional mid-day meals. It was also reported that at several Sochum centres, students' union bodies volunteer to assist students during their study hours, particularly during examinations. One significant contribution was a donation of over 400 books by the Government Middle School of Yimpang Village to its Sochum centre. It was also gathered that a Mobile Teaching Unit pays visits to some Sochum centres to teach mathematics and Science subjects to the students.

The findings in this section highlight that community involvement is a cornerstone of the Morung centres' success and sustainability. In Mokokchung's Arju centres, community elders, local leaders, and student unions play an active role in teaching traditional skills, folk arts, and storytelling. Their involvement keeps cultural knowledge alive across generations, while also creating a rich and meaningful learning environment. This shared effort strengthens community identity and instils a deep sense of pride in the younger generation.

Similarly, in Tuensang's Sochum centres, the collective contributions from parents, civil societies, village schools, churches, and students' unions extend beyond financial donations to include essential resources, infrastructure, volunteer support, and moral guidance. This wide-ranging community involvement keeps the centres well-equipped and helps them respond effectively to students' academic, social, and spiritual needs. The involvement of local stakeholders in constructing facilities, providing materials, and organising educational support demonstrates a powerful model of communal ownership and shared responsibility. Initiatives such as Mobile Teaching Units further showcase innovative ways of addressing resource gaps, making specialised subjects more accessible even in remote areas.

It is evident from the findings of subsection 8.3 that community involvement is much more active in the Sochum centres under Tuensang district compared to the Arju centres in Mokokchung. One contributing reason may be that the modern system of Morung was introduced earlier by the Eleutheros Christian Society (ECS) in Tuensang villages since 2006, while for the Mokokchung community members, this concept is relatively new and still gaining a foothold.

These community-driven efforts inevitably foster a resilient learning environment that weaves cultural preservation with modern learning, offering rural children sustainable and meaningful opportunities for growth. This approach exemplifies how active community partnership can enable rural education to flourish and may serve as a guiding model for similar initiatives across diverse contexts.

8.4. Research Question 4: Association Between the Education Imparted in the Morung Centres and the Holistic Education Envisaged in the NEP 2020 and SDG4

The NEP 2020 is notable for its adherence to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in terms of its commitment to ensuring quality education for all citizens. The policy emphasises a curriculum that is flexible, holistic, and multidisciplinary, transcending rote memorisation to prioritise competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and communication. This is in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 on offering inclusive and fair quality education and fostering opportunities for lifelong learning for everyone (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.).

The NEP (2020) mandates that the curriculum encompass fundamental arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, alongside science and mathematics, to foster the comprehensive development of learners and render education more holistic, practical, and rewarding. According to the policy, Education should cultivate character and equip learners to be ethical, rational, empathetic, and caring, while simultaneously preparing them for rewarding and productive employment (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020). In order for young students to grow into responsible, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive citizens in today’s rapidly changing world, the students must imbibe:

“Creativity and Innovativeness; sense of aesthetics and art; oral and written communication; health and nutrition; physical education, fitness, wellness, and sports; collaboration and teamwork; problem-solving and logical reasoning; vocational exposure and skills; digital literacy, coding, and computational thinking; ethical and moral reasoning; knowledge and practice of human and Constitutional values; gender sensitivity; Fundamental Duties; citizenship skills and values; knowledge of India; environmental awareness including water and resource conservation, sanitation and hygiene; and current affairs and knowledge of critical issues facing local communities, States, the country, and the world.” (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020, p.15)

This policy aligns with a holistic approach to education by promoting experiential learning beyond the classroom walls. Its objective is to inspire students to draw lessons from everyday experiences, fostering a broader and more inclusive understanding of the world.

According to Patel (2024), the NEP 2020 recognises the importance of the indigenous education system and aims to integrate it with modern education. The policy acknowledges that the indigenous education system in India has much to offer in promoting holistic teaching, cultural preservation, and community-based learning. Therefore, the NEP 2020 seeks to integrate the best practices of the Indigenous education system with modern education to create a more comprehensive and effective education system.

In consonance with the mandate by NEP 2020 to make education holistic that transcends classroom teaching and learning, the education imparted at the Morung centres is not confined to textbook knowledge but rather encompasses a wide range of knowledge transactions to the students, such as allowing them to develop skills and be socially and culturally active. Some of the benefits that are in alignment with the holistic approach of NEP 2020 that lead to the overall development of the Morung students are as follows-

8.4.1. Indigenous Handicrafts and Skills

Equipping the Morung students with Indigenous handicrafts and skills can enable them to be self-reliant as well as preserve the long-standing tradition of handcrafting indigenous products, making them valuable contributing members of the society.

8.4.2. Cognitive Development

Integration of modern and indigenous teaching-learning practised at the Morung centres fosters and enhances the students’ higher-order thinking skills, such as creativity, innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to apply their learning in their everyday lives.

8.4.3. Socio-emotional Development

The Morung students are given opportunities to take part in church activities and festivals. They participate by performing group songs, Bible recitations, folk songs, dances, and dramas. Summer camps, picnics, and field trips are also organised for the Morung students. Being involved in such social activities develops their social skills like building new friendships, interpersonal skills, fosters a spirit of unity, cultivates cooperation and leadership qualities. Students also develop emotional well-being as they become self-aware and sensitive to those around them. The more they interact with other children, the more they learn to accommodate the needs and well-being of others.

8.4.4. Physical Well-being

The Morung students are taught to keep their surroundings clean and tidy up their own beds. Most of them are also actively involved in sports in their respective schools. Some centres offer sports facilities which are actively utilised by the students to play in their free time. In certain centres, especially those managed by female wardens, female students are educated about menstruation and provided with sanitary pads when in need. Thus, the Morung inculcates fitness and proper hygiene habits among the students.

8.4.5. Moral and Spiritual Values

Values such as respect for elders, discipline, dignity of labour, honesty, cooperation, sensibility, gratitude, etc, are taught to the students in the Morung centres. They are also encouraged to attend and participate in church programs to learn Biblical principles and teachings for their spiritual well-being.

The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all” (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d.). The Morung education no doubt seeks to ensure inclusivity of all students irrespective of their backgrounds, 100% enrolment of students in the schools as well as the Morung centres, improved academic performances, and equitable access to free skill sessions that will help the students be independent in the long run.

Findings presented under subsection **8.4** suggest that the Morung centres serve as a living example of the holistic vision outlined in NEP 2020 and SDG4. Their ability to integrate indigenous skills such as handicrafts with cognitive, socio-emotional, physical, and moral development indicates a shift from rote learning toward an education that nurtures creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and cultural pride. This inclusive approach, which integrates traditional knowledge with modern education, can be interpreted as a sustainable model of rural empowerment, one that prepares students to grow as well-rounded individuals. In essence, the Morung centres operationalise NEP 2020’s holistic aspirations in tangible ways, demonstrating how education can be transformative, inclusive, and culturally relevant, thus serving as an impactful model for policy implementation and community-based education reform.

9. Suggestions

Based on the findings, several key suggestions are proposed to improve the overall functioning of the Morung centres -

Adopt measures to sensitise the community and parents about the importance of their involvement in the Morung activities. The community and parents' involvement in the operation of the Morung centres seemed to be much less in the Mokokchung district.

The infrastructure of the Morung centres must cater to the needs of children with special needs (CWSN) and thus create an environment of inclusivity. Parents of CWSN should be

encouraged to send their children to the Morung centres and mingle with other children. This will not only give social exposure to children with special needs but also develop in the rest of the children a sense of understanding, compassion, empathy and inclusion.

Well-furnished Morung buildings, beds, study desks and benches are much needed in some of the centres. In addition, since the centres under Mokokchung district are operating in the village schools and community halls, constructing a separate building for the centres would be very beneficial.

Proper toilet facilities should be provided. Though several Morung centres have proper separate toilets for boys and girls, most of the Morung centres lack this basic facility. In the Mokokchung district, since the Morung centres are functioning in the village government schools or the community halls, they are utilising the washrooms of the respective schools or halls. Whereas in the Tuensang district, though the Morung centres are operating separately in proper buildings, some of the centres do not have proper toilets for the students.

10. Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020, implemented by the Government of India, signifies a notable transformation in the educational framework of the country. It places great importance on promoting holistic development and catering to the changing demands of the 21st century (Bs & B, 2022). Within this broad and comprehensive framework, the Morung education system adopted by the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan of Nagaland as part of its quality and innovative intervention aims at ensuring equal opportunity, student-centred learning, well-rounded and lifelong educational growth. The community and the parents put their hope in Morung education for the educational growth and development of their children.

In the villages where most children are deprived of quality education, the introduction of the Morung centres came as a saving grace. The inability of the parents to guide their children in their studies due to factors like illiteracy, inability to provide tuition due to low household income or unavailability of educated tuition teachers in the villages, are some major barriers that hinder the academic pursuits of the students. However, with the introduction of the Morung centres, the students have been able to follow a proper study routine with guidance from mentors or wardens, which has had a profound effect on the academic performance of the students. In addition, the children are learning various skills that would help them become financially independent and responsible citizens as they grow into adults. Thus, the Morung institutions represent one of the significant achievements of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan in Nagaland.

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