

Exploring The Impact Of Tagore's Educational Philosophy On The Development Of NEP-2020

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Abstract

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) is a comprehensive blueprint for transforming India's education system, aimed at promoting equity, access, quality, and affordability at all levels of education. NEP 2020 aims to regain the flavour of Indian traditional custom culture, heritage, and ancient and contemporary knowledge system. Rabindranath Tagore's ideas and educational philosophy are incomparable and unprecedented. He emphasises the key issues: the independence of thinking and speech, active communication, blending nature and man, and the encouragement of the highest possible level of creative expression. Naturalism, idealism, humanism, and internationalism formed the basis of his educational philosophy. His educational ideas and philosophies are practically implemented by establishing two institutions, viz. Shantiniketan and Visva-Bharati. Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy is a foundation for several important National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020) areas. This paper discusses the influence of Tagore's educational philosophy and his experimentations on education while framing NEP-2020.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Educational Philosophy, Experimentation, NEP 2020.

1. Introduction:

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was a renowned poet, philosopher, writer, and educator. He won the Nobel Prize in 1913 for his Literature, Gitanjali (Song Offerings), a free-verse translation of his Bengal poetry based on mediaeval Indian religious melodies. Rabindranath Tagore's ideas and pedagogical philosophy are incomparable and unprecedented. Even in his most famous poems, Rabindranath emphasises three key issues: the independence of thinking and speech, active communication, blending nature and man, and the encouragement of the highest possible level of creative expression. He foresaw a holistic education profoundly grounded in an individual's culture and environment and related to the broader world. He preferred a curriculum that fostered creativity, imagination, and morality above the mechanical, formal system. Naturalism, idealism, humanism, and internationalism formed the basis of his educational philosophy.

Moreover, his education philosophy combined nationalist heritage, Western and Eastern philosophy, science, and a global perspective. Shantiniketan and Visva-Bharati, two institutions he established, are practical expressions of his educational ideas and philosophies. Through NEP-2020, steps have recently been taken to change the education system in India. NEP-2020 is found to be influenced by Tagore's philosophy.

2. Educational Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore:

Rabindranath Tagore was not a systematic philosopher. Still, his thoughts and worldview informed his writings are distinctive and profound. He fused traditional Indian philosophy with Western thought, creating a spiritual humanism that was uniquely his own. Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of life is deeply reflected in his philosophy of education. Tagore's philosophy of life is deeply reflected in his philosophy of education. Possessing philosophical thoughts, he is an idealist and naturalist. Some features of Rabindranath's educational philosophy are discussed below:

- **A close relationship between man and nature:** The flaw in Rabindranath's traditional educational system is its isolation from the natural environment. According to him, there is a close relationship between man and nature. Being in the presence of nature is well-organised, and he can realise the absolute truth. So he established Santiniketan, inspired by the ideals of education of the ancient Indian *Tapovana*. Here the teacher-students live in the shade of nature.
- **Freedom:** Tagore believed human progress required freedom. Education builds character and explores human potential. It is a liberal procedure that allows people to develop fully. Thus, only freedom-based education imparts learning.
- **Self-Realisation:** Tagore believed that humanism is spiritualism. Self-realisation and spirituality determine personality. Education is about self-realisation.
- **Indian Culture:** Rabindranath's educational scheme does not attempt to imitate foreign ones. He believed in Indian tradition and wanted to incorporate the ancient Indian tradition into his educational system. However, he was opposed to conventional reforms and artificial rituals.
- **Synthesis of Eastern and Western Cultures:** Although he believed in Indian traditions and beliefs, he tried to harmonise Western culture and educational planning. Rabindranath did not ignore the scientific knowledge from Western countries in India. In his educational plan, the synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures was prioritised.
- **Humanity:** Rabindranath's educational philosophy occupies a vital place for humanity. He did not admit artificial in people. On the contrary, he loved everyone, rich and poor. So, unity and equality have been prioritised in his education system.
- **Sense of beauty:** Rabindranath was a worshiper of beauty. Therefore, the joy of feeling the world's beauty is constantly flowing in him, and the main task of education will be to familiarise the child with it.
- **Self-expression:** Children will have the chance to express themselves in the classroom. Rabindranath believed that the educational system should foster the development of students' creative abilities. According to him, not only are children's organs moved into creative activities like painting, art, and sculpting, but his intellect is also sufficiently developed.
- **Overall development of a child:** Rabindranath emphasised the child's overall development. According to him, the main task of education will be the complete development of the child's body, mind and soul.

3. Rabindranath Tagore's experimentation in the Indian education system:

Tagore's writings and the educational experiments he conducted at Santiniketan provide the best insight into his contributions to the field of education. This is primarily because Tagore did not produce any pedagogical manifesto. His views on education shifted over time after much trial and error and exposure to various educational systems worldwide. He envisioned a locally grounded and globally aware education built on joyful discovery tailored to each child's unique interests and personality.

In his opinion, classes should be conducted outside beneath the trees so that students can spontaneously understand the mutability of the plant and animal worlds and the cyclical pattern of the seasons. In between lessons, students could run and climb the trees around the classroom, where they sat on hand-woven mats. Students were required to participate in outdoor activities like hiking and birdwatching and were taught about the natural history of the world around them. Tagore adapted the children's school timetables so that they could take into account weather changes and other natural occurrences, and he also made up seasonal celebrations for them to enjoy.

Tagore's educational philosophy emphasised the cultivation of the senses and the mind via art. He claimed in his writing that a country bereft of music and the fine arts was one whose people could not express themselves. He believes the arts should be included in every classroom, including music, literature, art, dance, and drama. While Tagore was alive, he was one of the first to promote and unite many styles of Indian dance. He was instrumental in reviving traditional dances and introducing new ones from various areas of India, like Manipuri, Kathak, and Kathakali. Also, he was an advocate for contemporary dance. Tagore included his pupils in his writing and composing sessions, believing this would help them learn more effectively. In the classroom, he advocated raising literature at challenging levels students may not wholly comprehend but would engage them. Students had access to the chamber where he presented his latest works to academics and critics and were invited to share their works on literary nights. Many student-made illustrated periodicals were published while the students were in Shantiniketan. The children were encouraged to paint and sketch anything they wanted on their ideas or those of the various guest artists and authors.

Tagore envisioned Visva-Bharati as a cultural melting pot, a place of learning where people from different backgrounds and perspectives could come together to learn and grow with the ultimate goal of understanding. Rabindranath Tagore is a living symbol of the cooperation and inspiration he promoted. Tagore argued for a new approach to teaching that would involve a shift in the curriculum. Instead of teaching about national cultures in terms of the wars they've fought and the cultural domination they've imposed, he argued for an approach that examines history and culture through the lens of the progress achieved in reducing social and religious divisions. Tagore made significant contributions to the field of education. He was an early proponent in India of a humane education system that considered the natural world and sought to cultivate whole people. Shantiniketan provided one of the first coeducational programmes in South Asia. Its approach to teaching in the local language, Bengali, established a model for other regional educational institutions.

Visva-Bharati and Sriniketan were ground-breaking institutions that paved the way for new ways of thinking and doing things across various fields, from mass education to pan-Asian and global cultural interchange to innovative forms of higher education. Rabindranath Tagore had an unusual poetic approach to teaching and learning. He wanted to make poetry at Shantiniketan "in a medium other than words," he said. He created a holistic plan and a one-of-a-kind curriculum for teaching about the environment and encouraging artistic expression in an atmosphere conducive to cross-cultural understanding because of his poetic vision.

4. Influence of Rabindranath Tagore's idea on NEP-2020 :

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020), which the Indian government approved in July 2020, attempts to regain the flavour of Indian traditional custom culture, heritage and ancient and contemporary knowledge system. The goal of NEP-2020 is to foster the growth of well-rounded individuals who can think critically and act ethically, show compassion and empathy towards others, face adversity and emerge stronger, demonstrate scientific curiosity and imaginative flair, and have strong ethical foundations. Our Constitution calls for a fair, inclusive, and plural society, and this programme seeks to produce people who are actively involved in and contributing to that goal. NEP 2020 shares some striking similarities with Tagore's educational concept. NEP 2020 is a comprehensive framework for transforming India's education system, aimed at promoting equity, access, quality, and affordability in education at all levels. Some key similarities between NEP 2020 and Tagore's educational concept are discussed below:

i. Reviving Ancient Indian Culture, Traditions, and Knowledge:

Rabindranath Tagore's educational scheme does not attempt to imitate foreign ones. He believed in Indian tradition and wanted to incorporate the ancient Indian tradition into his educational system. The main aim of education at Santiniketan is to teach the students the ethics and spirituality of ancient India. The ideal reflection of the moral and spiritual education of ancient India's ascetics is evident in Santiniketan's educational system.

NEP-2020 aims to enhance the relatability, relevance, interest, and effectiveness of education for students. NEP 2020 also proposes that the curriculum and pedagogy should be redesigned to incorporate Indian and local context and ethos, including culture, traditions, heritage, customs, language, philosophy, geography,

ancient and contemporary knowledge, societal and scientific needs, indigenous and traditional ways of learning, starting from the foundational stage. Whenever feasible, narratives, artistic expressions, recreational activities, athletic pursuits, illustrations, challenges, and other materials will be selected with a solid connection to the Indian and regional geographical context (Govt. of India, 2020).

ii. Experiential learning:

In Shantiniketan, hospitality, self-help and reverence for elders shaped an essential, regular, and austere life. The students were responsible for all school chores except food preparation. The learning was founded on self-experience of the surrounding universe and thorough reflection. His education system calls for students to spend their free time telling stories, gazing at the stars, singing, and putting on plays during the nighttime play periods. Songs and plays were often composed by students themselves. The student was given autonomy for their education. The concepts of education espoused by Tagore are connected to learning through experience.

NEP-2020 recommends that Experiential learning, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy, and others, will be used at all levels as standard pedagogy within each topic and to explore subject relationships. By incorporating cultural aspects of the languages being taught (such as films, theatre, storytelling, poetry, and music), and by drawing connections with a wide range of relevant subjects and with students' own experiences, the instruction of all languages will be enriched through innovative and experiential methods, such as gamification and applications. (Govt. of India, 2020, p.16).

iii. Pedagogy of teaching:

Tagore advocated using the 'activity method', 'Education through excursion', 'Debate and discussion', 'Heuristic method', etc. of education. He believed them to be crucial for developing the body and intellect of a child. Tagore firmly believed that the activity method could generate a learning environment centred on the student's needs. He thought field trips and sightseeing tours of historical sites would be a great way to teach students about economics, geography, and other social sciences. Tagore used the heuristic approach as central to his school's curriculum. In this approach, students are encouraged to express their confusion about a specific subject through questions, and teachers are tasked with providing satisfactory answers. Tagore's school organised narrative, discussion, and debate events to help pupils hone their public speaking skills.

NEP-2020 recommends modern pedagogical approaches to enhance teaching-learning processes. Key recommendations include holistic and integrated learning, engaging and enjoyable learning experiences, competency-based education, technology integration, flexible curriculum, and fostering critical thinking and creativity. These approaches aim to prepare students for real-world challenges and promote inclusivity in the classroom. Moreover, NEP-2020 calls for constructivist teaching methods throughout science, mathematics, the social sciences, literature, and Indian cultural history.

iv. Reduction of curriculum and to enhance essential learning and critical thinking:

In Shantiniketan, although required textbooks had to be studied in matriculation courses, stereotypical texts were banned, and students were encouraged to read widely. The learning was founded on self-experience of the surrounding universe and thorough reflection. His education system calls for students to spend their free time telling stories, gazing at the stars, singing, and putting on plays during the nighttime play periods. Songs and plays were often composed by students themselves. Debates were organised to test their critical thinking. Students were inspired to write and publish them in the magazine. There was a strong focus on the pupils' health. Game time and gardening time were both required.

The NEP-2020 calls for rational decision-making and innovation. NEP-2020 recommends encouraging critical thinking with holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning; each subject's curriculum will be pared down. The required material will include essential concepts, ideas, applications, and problem-solving. For more profound and more immersive learning, classroom sessions will consist of more enjoyable, creative, collaborative, and exploratory activities for students. Questions will be encouraged from students.

v. Respect for diversity and local context:

Tagore established Sriniketan in Visva-Bharati to study the needs of the locality. He believed that a university's work should include collecting accurate knowledge about rural conditions, the customs of rural people regarding various aspects of life (such as agriculture, the economy, and social issues), as well as the difficulties that rural people face in these areas. He hoped the students and research teams would apply their newfound understanding of rural areas' challenges.

The NEP-2020 emphasises respect for diversity and local context in all curricula, pedagogy, and policy while remembering that schooling is a contemporary topic.

vi. Flexibility and Choice:

Tagore thought education should be flexible and tailored to each student's requirements and interests. He supported students' right to self-direction and choice in their education so they may follow their interests and passions.

NEP 2020 also promotes flexibility and choice in education. It proposes adopting a modular approach to learning, allowing students to choose their courses, subjects, and learning pathways. It also encourages using technology-enabled learning and open educational resources to provide greater access to education and enable self-paced and self-directed learning.

vii. Community and Social Responsibility

Tagore thought having a harmonious relationship between the individual and society was essential. He felt that education should help students create a sense of community and social duty to help make the world better.

NEP 2020 also talks about how important it is for schools to teach about society and social duty. It suggests combining community work and hands-on learning so students can get involved in their neighbourhoods and learn to be socially responsible. It also encourages teaching environmental education and sustainable practices in schools to teach students how to be good global citizens.

viii. Inclusivity and Equity

Tagore felt the importance of inclusivity and equity in the field of education. Regardless of one's social, economic, or cultural background, he thought everyone should have access to education.

NEP 2020, on the other hand, encourages equity and inclusiveness in education. It recommends expanding early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education. It also encourages women, disabled children, and rural and remote places to participate. Further, it suggests using a gender-sensitive and inclusive curriculum to help all children feel appreciated and valued.

ix. Teacher Empowerment and Professional Development

Tagore believed in the importance of teacher empowerment and professional development. He thought that teachers should be given the freedom and autonomy to create a nurturing and supportive learning environment and should be provided with opportunities for continuous learning and growth.

NEP 2020 also promotes teacher empowerment and professional development. It suggests using a competency-based approach to teacher education, giving teachers the instruments to help students learn throughout the curriculum and in many different ways. Additionally, it encourages the use of technology in teacher preparation programmes and ongoing professional development, giving teachers access to the most recent pedagogical theories and instructional strategies.

x. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

The value of linguistic and cultural variety in education was something Tagore strongly believed in. He believed that education should instil in students a feeling of global citizenship and an appreciation and respect for many cultures and languages.

The significance of cultural and linguistic diversity in education is particularly emphasised by NEP 2020. To help pupils understand and respect the variety of Indian culture and language, it suggests including regional languages and promoting multilingualism. Additionally, it encourages the integration of indigenous

knowledge and customs into the curriculum, enabling students to absorb and value the knowledge of India's many distinct cultures.

xi. Vocational Education:

In Visva-Bharati, Tagore started *Shilpa Sadan*, a Shilpa Shikshan Mahavidyalaya. The institute provided industry works such as weaving, woodworking, bookbinding, leather work, etc.

NEP 2020 intends to introduce elementary and secondary school children to various trades and professions, such as pottery, electrical, metallic, woodworking, paper crafting, textile making, sewing, printing, etc. NEP 2020 aims to integrate vocational education into regular education, providing 50% of students. It supports the National Skills Qualification Framework and proposes digital literacy, critical thinking, continuous skill upgradation, and entrepreneurship.

5. Conclusion:

NEP 2020 is an extensive blueprint for transforming India's education system that aims to promote equity, access, quality, and affordability at all levels of education. Rabindranath Tagore believed that education should develop the whole person, supporting their physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual health and helping them discover their talents. He advocated for a complete, sustainable, inclusive society promoting healthy human-society relations. The National Education Policy 2020 shares striking similarities with Tagore's educational concept. Both emphasise the importance of holistic and multidisciplinary education, flexibility and choice, community and social responsibility, inclusivity and equity, teacher empowerment and professional development, cultural and linguistic diversity, etc. By aligning with Tagore's educational concept, NEP 2020 has the potential to transform education in India and create a more harmonious, sustainable, and inclusive society.

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