

# Reflective Study on Rethinking of School Education in India

J. Sahaya Roselin<sup>1</sup>, Sr. Selin Mary<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Medical and Psychiatry, St. Joseph university Nagaland

## Abstract

In an era marked by significant technological advancements, rethinking school education in India is a compelling imperative. The existing system has perpetuated inequalities, leaving many on the fringes without access to the benefits of modern educational technology. This abstract delves into the multifaceted aspects of this rethinking process, drawing insights from the National Education Policy (NEP), Gandhi's perspective on realism in education, and humanistic learning approaches. The NEP introduces a transformative shift in education, emphasizing holistic development, creativity, and practical skills over rote memorization. However, challenges persist, including student suicides and stark disparities in educational access and quality. Data reveals alarming suicide rates among students and inequalities in learning outcomes between urban and rural areas. Moreover, a significant portion of engineering graduates remains unemployable. To address these issues, this abstract proposes student-centric reforms, such as incorporating long-term projects, self-expression workshops, financial literacy, and a tailored approach to education. By reimagining the Indian school education system, we aspire to foster holistic development, personal growth, and enlightenment, ensuring that education truly benefits all members of society.

**Keywords:** Indian education, School reform, National Education Policy, Educational inequalities

## Introduction

In an era dominated by technology, the world has undergone a profound digital transformation. Endowed with its remarkable potential, humanity has harnessed its intellectual prowess to create a plethora of advanced technological marvels, including artificial intelligence, supercomputers, and various other innovations. While we take pride in our progress, it is crucial that the benefits of technological advancements in education extend to all members of society, including marginalization on fringes. Every individual deserves access to educational technological developments without encountering barriers. Regrettably, the current reality depicts that only a privileged minority truly enjoys these advancements, casting a shadow on the ideals of equality and civic unity that education should uphold. This is particularly evident in the context of educational technology in India where inequities persist. In this context, it is necessary to reconsider the school educational system in India.

## Etymological Meaning of Education

“The origin the word ‘Education’ has been derived from the Latin words ‘Educare,’ ‘Educere’ and ‘Educatum.’ The word ‘Educare’ means to ‘nourish’ or to ‘bring up.’ The word ‘Educere’ means to ‘lead forth’ or to ‘draw out.’ The word” educatum” comprises two terms: ‘E’ and ‘Duco.’ Here ‘E’ means, a movement from ‘inward’ to ‘outward’ and ‘Duco’ means ‘developing’ or ‘progressing.’ This implies that,

through organized questions, knowledge, understanding, and the potential of children must be brought out. It is not the pouring in of knowledge, assuming that children are like empty vessels; it brings out the hidden potentialities of the child". (Ravi, S. Samuel, 2022).

### **Definition on Education**

"By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man - body, mind and spirit. Literacy is neither the end of education nor the beginning. This is only one of the means by which men and women can be educated. Literacy, in itself, is not education. Therefore, I would begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft and enabling it to be produced from the moment it begins its training. I hold that the highest development of the mind and soul is possible under this system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today, but scientifically, that is, the child should know the why and wherefore of every process."- (M.K. Gandhi, 1947)

### **Background study of Education in India**

The education system in India has a rich historical background dating back to ancient times. Traditional education emphasizes holistic development and was imparted through Gurukuls, where students received personalized instruction from a guru (teacher). This system emphasizes values, philosophy, and practical skills, and during British colonial rule (the 18th to mid-20th century), the Indian education system underwent significant changes. The British introduced a formal education system to create a class of educated Indians who could assist with administrative tasks. This led to the establishment of universities and schools that followed the Western curriculum. (Panigrahi, Varghese N.V, 2020).

After independence in 1947, India aimed to provide universal and high-quality education. The government has formulated policies to expand educational access, focusing on eradicating illiteracy and achieving social equality. Subsequently, the Right to Education Act (2009) was a pivotal step toward making education a fundamental right for children aged 6-14. India's education system is divided into three levels through the National Educational Policy: primary, secondary, and higher secondary education. The system is highly centralized, with curriculum decisions often made at the state or national level. Notably, science, engineering, medicine, and information technology are popular fields of study.

### **Necessity for Rethinking**

In our country, which has a population exceeding 1.486 billion, it is evident that a comprehensive and all-encompassing education system could catalyze a fresh chapter for India. Education should promote equality and foster unity among its citizens. Unfortunately, education in India causes inequality, creates a divide among students, people who live in the fringes of the society unable to access the modern educational technology, the realization of a truly thorough educational model rests upon the holistic nurturing of student rights at the grassroots level. While I refrain from adopting a wholly pessimistic stance that condemns the existing system and advocates for complete overhaul, it is imperative to acknowledge and rectify the significant disparities that permeate our present perception of education.

### **Objectives**

1. NEP policy on rethinking of School Education
2. Gandhi's perspective on realism in Education

### 3. Humanistic learning Approach

#### **Methodology**

The present study is based on secondary data collected from various research articles, newspaper, magazines, reports, books etc. This data was analyzed and reviewed to draw at the conclusion.

#### **NEP Policy on Rethinking of School Education**

In response to these challenges, the Indian government introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) in 2020, marking a significant paradigm shift (NEP Article 1.1). The NEP aims to transform the education system into one that nurtures holistic development, creativity, and practical skills (NEP Article 4.2).

Our education system tends to emphasize memorization rather than critical thinking, comprehension, and communication skills (NEP Article 4.4). The original purpose of schooling is to nurture curiosity and imagination, fostering creativity. However, students often face excessive syllabus demands, memorization pressures, and limited space for independent thinking (NEP Article 4.5). A transformative shift is essential. A balanced 30:70 approach, combining theory-focused learning with hands-on experiences, can nurture experimentation, creativity, and improvisation (NEP Article 4.10). This approach facilitates mental growth. Theoretical lessons could incorporate role-playing for younger students and case studies or presentations for older ones.

This holistic mental development, rooted in heightened creativity, not only enhances employability but also nurtures entrepreneurship and strategic thinking (NEP Article 4.12). The forgotten concept of 'Karma-Yoga, needs revival. (NEP Article 4.15).

#### **Gandhi's perspective on realism in Education**

Gandhi's perspective on realism in education was deeply rooted in his belief in experiential learning and practicality. He emphasized the importance of connecting education with the real world and practical life. For Gandhi, education was not just about acquiring knowledge but about preparing individuals to become active and responsible members of society. He believed that education should focus on developing skills that are directly applicable to everyday life and should not be divorced from the realities of society. (M.K. Gandhi, 1947)

Gandhi's method of teaching aligned with his philosophy of learning through direct experience. He advocated for a hands-on approach, where students actively engage with their surroundings and learn through doing. He was critical of rote memorization and theoretical learning that lacked practical application. Instead, he promoted learning by doing, where students would engage in activities that would not only enhance their skills but also contribute to their personal and moral development.

#### **Humanistic learning Approach**

Humanistic learning approaches, founded on the works of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, prioritize the individual learner. They emphasize that education encompasses more than intellect, aiming to nurture the "whole person" by considering interests, goals, and enthusiasm. This student-centered method encourages learners to take charge of their education, driven by intrinsic motivation. At its core, humanistic education strives for human well-being, valuing human dignity, potential, and values. (Rogers, C. R. 1969).

Aligned with constructivism and adult learning theory, humanistic learning theory asserts that learning is a natural drive, culminating in self-actualization the fulfilment of emotional, physical, and cognitive needs. With roots in Maslow's hierarchy, this theory connects learning to fulfilling broader needs and the learner's perceived utility of knowledge. Emphasizing learner freedom and autonomy, this theory underscores the intricate link between learning and meeting other needs.

### **Unveiling the Shadows: Understanding Student Suicide Data"**

The distressing surge in student suicides reveals a stark reality. As per the 2021 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, student suicides reached a five-year peak, surpassing 13,000 cases in that year, up from the previous year's count of 12,500.

The year 2020 saw a student suicide occurring every 42 minutes, as stated by the NCRB report. However, it's important to acknowledge that NCRB data is an underestimation, as indicated by a Lancet study. This research highlights that NCRB-reported suicide rates were 37 percent lower than the rates reported by the Global Burden of Disease published by Lancet, implying that out of every 100 suicides, only 63 are captured in NCRB records. Notably, during this period, IITs, National Institutes of Technology (NITs), and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) collectively documented 61 suicide cases. Of these, IITs accounted for the majority, followed by NITs (24) and IIMs (4).

### **Equal Access to Quality Education**

The existing disparities in educational access and quality between urban and rural areas, as well as across socio-economic strata, need to be rectified. A rethought system should ensure that every student, regardless of their background, receives a high-quality education that empowers them to succeed.

### **ASER survey Report**

As per the Learning Outcome Survey of ASER 2019, only 58.8% of Class 6 Students and 74.6% of Class 8 Students can read Class 2 Level Text. Even lesser can explain the meaning. And Arithmetic figures are even worse; for instance, only 25.8% of Class 6 students and 23.2% of class 8 students can subtract.

### **Churning out an Ocean of Mediocrity.**

The issue of low employability among engineering graduates is not limited to primary school levels. According to the 2016 Aspiring Minds National Employability Report, 80% of our engineering graduates are unemployable. This is reflected in the recent announcement of over 500,000 post-graduate applicants for the position of a 'Government Sweeper' in Uttar Pradesh. This is not just a statistical phenomenon, but a stark reality that we are well aware of. The sub-standard quality of education in over 70% of our schools and colleges, particularly in rural areas, is a familiar scenario for us as Indians.

### **Suggestions and Recommendation**

1. Children can be engaged in long term projects such as building a home garden with new techniques (grafting, utilization of space) this will make children flexible and boost their creativity.
2. Self-expression workshops- Mandatory workshops can be incorporated in time-table to let the students express themselves in the form of art, singing, dancing, storytelling, writing, etc which should be shared through a common platform. Gradually, students will develop interest to sit in front of the screen and unleash their full potential.

3. Financial Literacy- The journey can start by managing finances at home and gradually learning about investment opportunities.
4. Student-Centric Approach: Tailor education to students' individual learning styles and interests, promoting engagement and personalized growth.

### Conclusion

The rethinking of Indian school education involves a fundamental reimagining of the entire system to align with the demands of the modern world. This transformative process encompasses a holistic curriculum that integrates practical skills and critical thinking, a shift from rote learning to active engagement. And commodification of knowledge has led to the production and sale of educational products, diminishing the holistic essence of true education a transformative and comprehensive development of the individual. In this essay, we delve into the multifaceted concerns stemming from the current state of education in India. By critically examining the disparities exacerbated by technological strides, the mechanical approach to learning, NEP polices implementation, argumentation, suggestion and recommendation and also the erosion of education's true essence is highlighted, It is through such policies implementation and introspection and reform that we can aspire to harness the true promise of education, fostering not only erudition but also enlightenment.

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