

УДК 378.1(540)

DOI: 10.32342/2074-5362-2021-2-31-6

Dr. RAGES JOHN,

*Assistant Professor in Educational Psychology Department
Government College of Teacher Education, Kerala, India*

INDIAN EDUCATION NOW AND NEXT: SWITCHING FROM TAUGHT TO THOUGHT CONCEPT

Indian Education towards the 21st century, outlined in the National Curriculum Framework and the National Policy reflects the curriculum, matter, method, contents, and aims of ancient Indian system. Emphasis on the thoughts created by the pupils against the thoughts taught by the teachers is the hallmark of the emerging education, which, in fact, is an echo of the Gurukula system of education followed in the Vedic period of India.

The demand and the need for education in the 21st century still remain the same as it was in ancient and medieval times. The difference is that the ancient tools and instruments are replaced by the modern electronic gadgets, with the industrial sector increasing day by day. However, the human potential that drive the technology remains unchanged. As in the past, so in the modern education, the students are not just involved in coveting the ranks, but their main focus is on knowledge and enhancement of skills. Social aim of education guides the personal aim; education aims not merely to make creative human being, but to make socially useful creative individuals.

The emerging education in India is the combination of ancient wisdom and modern science and technology. The ancient system was specifically focused on the training of the mind to ensure peace and progress. The modern method of education emphasizing construction of knowledge do focus on the thought rather than the taught, towards the same aim- peace and progress.

Ultimately, the new Education policy of India offers a hope that learning becomes interesting and divergent, with the idea that learning should be child-centric, holistic, integrated, enjoyable and engaging. Schools are slowly breaking the straitjackets of arts, commerce and science streams in high school, and aiming to introduce vocational courses with internships, as it was almost two thousand years ago. Therefore, with the rise of modern education, the ancient Indian education system is on a revival to add force to mobilize the entire population to take the nation to a realm of wholistic progress.

Key terms: *Nalanda and Taxila, paedocentric, multidisciplinary, experiential, reflective, collaborative, memorization, and Moksha.*

Індійська освіта 21 століття, викладена в Рамці національної навчальної програми та національної політики, тісно пов'язана з освітньою програмою, методом, змістом і цілями давньої індійської системи. Акцент на думках, створених учнями, проти думок, яких навчають вчителі, є ознакою нової освіти, що, по суті, є відлунням системи освіти Гурукула, якої дотримувалися у ведичний період Індії. Попит і потреба в освіті в 21 столітті все ще залишаються такими ж, як і в стародавній та середньовічні часи. Різниця в тому, що стародавні засоби та інструменти замінюються сучасними електронними гаджетами, а промисловий сектор збільшується з кожним днем. Однак людський потенціал, який керує технологією, залишається незмінним. Як і в минулому, так і в сучасній

освіті студенти не просто залучаються до знання, а основна увага приділяється вдосконаленню навичок. Соціальна мета освіти визначає й особисту мету. Освіта повинна не просто сформувати освічену людину, а зробити її соціально корисною творчою особистістю.

Нова освіта в Індії є поєднанням стародавньої мудрості та сучасної науки і техніки. Стародавня система була спеціально зосереджена на тренуванні розуму для забезпечення миру та прогресу. Сучасний метод освіти, який робить акцент на конструюванні знань, зосереджується не стільки на змісті, скільки на меті навчання – заради миру та прогресу. Зрештою, нова освітня політика Індії дає надію на те, що навчання стане цікавим і різноманітним. Навчання має бути орієнтованим на дитину, цілісним, інтегрованим, приємним та захоплюючим. Школи поступово розривають гамівні сорочки діяльності, комерції та науки в середній школі та прагнуть запровадити професійні курси зі стажуванням, як це було майже дві тисячі років тому. Тому, з появою сучасної освіти, стародавня індійська система освіти відроджується, щоб додати сил, мобілізувати все населення, привести націю в царство цілісного прогресу.

Ключові терміни: *Наланда і Таксила, педоцентричний, мультидисциплінарний, досвідчений, рефлексивний, спільна робота, запам'ятовування та Мокша.*

Introduction

The relationship between education and economic development has already been widely acknowledged across the globe. However, the same is assessed from time to time by those who are keen on innovations and progress. Accordingly, in 2010, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development had a study on education, and they arrived at the conclusion that, “Countries whose students consistently perform well in schools will find economic success. And nations with students demonstrating low academic achievement will face detrimental effects to their economy.” This was an affirmation on the time-tested fact that education and economy are allies in progress, and that the educated people are the backbone of any progressive nation.

A nation is built on people, not territories. Quality of a nation is the quality of its people, and the quality of the people is the quality of their thoughts. No matter what and how they look like; as the thoughts, so the mind, and as the mind so the man. Thinking people being the asset of a nation, the key to development is the skillful creation and mobilization of the human thoughts. The ability to think is natural to human being, but to think productively is a skill to be developed through education.

Hence, for development, the primary requirement for a nation is to have people, and the next, is to have them educated. As far as India is concerned, the first criterion is met, India is rich in population, and the second calls for further steps.

India having the 132 million people is at the second most populated country in the world (PRB, 2015). But according to the IMF World Economic Outlook (April - 2021), GDP (nominal) per capita of India in 2021 is projected at \$2,191 at current prices. India is at 144th position out of 194 economies in terms of GDP (nominal) per capita. A critical analysis of the situation unearth the reason as the inept education system in India.

But there was a time in India when education was well developed at par excellence, producing intellectuals who had contributed to the world civilizations

and culture. Even in the modern age of science and technology, the contributions of the ancient Indian scholars are still relevant and in demand such as the contribution of Madhava, and Aryabhata. The ancient the period from 1500 – 500 BC was called Vedic period in India, (Bronze Age) which had a well flourished system of education, which was popularly known as Gurukula system of education.

Ancient Universities

There were two renowned centers of learning in ancient India which attracted scholars from around the world. One was the University of Takshashila (Taxila) which existed around 200 BC. The number of students in Takshashila was 10,500, who consists of not only Indians, but Greeks, Babylonians, Arabians, Chinese, Korean, Japanese etc. There were 300 classrooms, elaborate library with a collection of millions of manuscripts. Some of the renowned scholars produced by Taxila were Panini, the creator of Sanskrit grammar, Kotilya (Chanakya), the creator of ‘Arthashastra’, Vachaspati Patanjali of Ayurveda as well as Pandit Atreya of physiology. Taxila lasted for about 800 years and it was destroyed by barbaric invasion during the 5th century AD. Archaeologists have unearthed the ruins of a huge complex in 1914 (Mukerjee, S.N. 1955).

The second was Nalanda University near Patna, which was a centre of learning from the 5th century to 12th century AD. It had about 10,000 students from abroad. The library was rich with about 3 million manuscripts. Nalanda in Sanskrit is composed by a combination of three words, ‘Na’, ‘Alam’ and ‘Da’ meaning: ‘There is no limit to the gift of knowledge’ (Tripathi, R. S. , 1971). Nalanda fell victim to religious fanaticism in 1197 AD. With the fall of the two universities and the barbaric rules that followed, the golden age of Indian education came to an end.

Awakening India

From the long slumber of almost 800 years, Indian Education woke up to the 19th century. Modern education in India was evolved during the British rule, along with the evolution of modern state and the modern economy, and it attained an imperative place in the consciousness of the independent India. In 1948 Central Advisory Board of India set up Radhakrishnan commission for university education, and in 1952, Mudaliar Commission for secondary education. In 1964 Kothari Commission suggested a national system of education. From this emerged the first National Policy in 1968 as a key milestone in India’s march towards education. Subsequently in 1986 second National Policy on Education came out announcing, “In our national perception, education is essentially for all” (MHRD, 2014). A major highlight of Indian Education is the declaration of Education For All, or Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). It is the Government of India’s flagship programme for achievement of universal elementary education as mandated by the 86th amendment to the Constitution of India – making free and compulsory education to the children of 6-14 years age group, a fundamental right.

Education in India thrived during the decades since independence. However, development and contribution to science and culture remained comparatively minimal (Seqneria, T.N., 1952). Despite its monumental progress, education in India continued to face daunting challenges at multiple levels, particularly in

terms of quality. The chief reason was, the model of education emerged after the 19th century grew more focusing on Taught concept rather than Thought concept; it focused more on what was taught to students and ignored what students thought about it. Education was concerned with what went into the students in terms of knowledge than what came out from them as creativity. Students were viewed as receivers of knowledge and were expected to passively accept the knowledge shared from their teacher.

Reforms in education started on war foot globally by the last decades of 20th century, and most high-ranking countries were able to realize substantial improvements in their education system. Along with the global changes, in 2005 National Curriculum Framework (NCF-2005) of India outlined a new perspective on education making a major shift in approach from teacher-centered to child centered, and from lecturing to activity-based learning. Students were no longer viewed merely as receivers, but producers of knowledge. Independent thinking was encouraged among students, because, innovation and creativity thrive on thinking without boundaries, and with student's autonomy.

Surprisingly, the paradigm shift in the modern education across the world showed up the very manner and methods of Vedic system, echoing the very spirit of Gurukula education of ancient India. The suggestions and views of educationalists like John Dewey, Gandhi, Pestalozzi, and Rousseau who emphasized student's innate capacity to think productively, had much in common with the views of ancient Indian system. Therefore, while going global, the educational reforms in India also geared itself to restore its heritage of knowledge systems. Accordingly, in 2020, the National Education Policy (NEP2020) proposed a new system of education based on Indian legacy to address India's education gaps.

National Education Policy of 2020, (NEP-2020) and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)-2005) resolved to lead India in the 21st century, envisage an education system rooted in Indian ethos, focusing on the rich, diverse, ancient, and modern culture and knowledge systems and traditions of India (MHRD, 2020). The salient features of the modern education in India which come in terms with ancient Vedic system are listed out.

The Approach of Education National Policy 2020 and the Curriculum Framework 2005 emphasized paedocentric approach to education, suggesting a system that is adaptable to the need and nature of the students. Recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, the teachers promote holistic development of students in both academic and non-academic spheres. In practice, this approach has much in common with the ancient Vedic Gurukula system.

The approach of the ancient Vedic Gurukula system was to provide individual assistance to the students focusing on their wholistic progress. It was a residential education system where the children used to stay away from their parents and families, under the guidance of the teacher who watch over the progress of the students in all aspects (Kumari, P., 2017).

Curriculum

A major breakthrough in NEP 2020 is the suggestion for a curriculum which is flexible, and multidisciplinary, facilitating any time entry and any time exit

from the course. Students choose to exit at any stage with appropriate certification. Academic Bank of Credit helps them for re-entry and pursue course later. Curriculum being multidisciplinary the learners choose their learning trajectories and programmes with preferred combinations, leading to their professional path. No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, and between vocational and academic streams. Against choice-based credit system, competency-based credit system is an innovative adoption in the new system.

In the ancient Indian Gurukulam system of education too, education was multidisciplinary and had considerable amount of student autonomy. The subjects in the Vedic education were as diverse as algebra, astronomy, chemistry, medicine, geography, literature, ethics, aesthetics, physics, arts, martial arts, dance, yoga, ecology, and spirituality taught in integration (Ghosh, S. C. , 2001).

Curricular and co-curricular separation were not there, and nor was a science and humanities demarcation. The subjects taught were interlinked, with smooth shifting from one topic to the others ensuring the unity and integrity of all knowledge. The fundamental goal of building their curriculum was to develop students physically and mentally.

Moral Education

In the modern education, integrated into the curriculum subjects are the topics like arts, aesthetics, ethics and constitutional values such as empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic values, spirit of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice (MHRD, 2020).

Vedic Gurukula education emphasized on character development, with soft skills and social skills integrated into the subjects of learning. The ancient education focused on imparting ethics like humility, truthfulness, discipline, self-reliance, and respecting all creations to the students. Self-Awareness was the paramount knowledge highlighted in Vedic system.

Method of Education

Modern education already taken shape with the NCF 2005 had emphasized child-centered approach with teaching methods catering to individual needs of students. Key aspects of modern method which are well aligned to the ancient Gurukula system of education are the following:

1. Eclectic method: In both modern and ancient system the individuality of the students is taken into consideration, because, learning style and mode of transaction differ from person to person. Hence, the method of education is eclectic. In gurukula system, teacher individually assists each student with instructions, advice, suggestion, demonstration, and practical experience. Similarly, no single method of instruction is exclusively imposed in the New Education Policy (NEP2020), though the policy highlights experiential, contextual, collaborative, and hybrid learning approaches.

2. Collaborative: The NEP (2020) also emphasizes the need for collaborative education. The flexibility of the system allows students collaborate for knowledge construction even while maintaining their individual style of learning. Students engage in peer teaching, group discussions, debates, explorations and projects with collaborative effort.

In Gurukula system also collaboration among the students were encouraged. Debates and discussions were held often. Students could discuss topics of interest and put their views forward. Critical Analysis was encouraged in discussions. The students who think critically and come to their own conclusions may even disagree with their teachers and bring them around to their way of thinking.

3. Experiential: Modern Indian education emphasize inquisitiveness. An inquisitive approach is possible only through the process such as Enquire, Explore, Experiment, and Evaluate. Enquiry enables a person to start raising questions like- What, Why, When, Who, Where...., and find answers to the questions. An enquiring mind is the base for rational thinking. Deeper level of enquiry leads to Exploring and thereafter to Experimenting and Evaluating. In Vedic system of education experimenting was the self-learning process and an analysis of the outcomes of such self-experiment led to evaluation. Project and Research-Based Learning is the echo of the Hands-on Learning or Learning by doing practiced in Gurukula system, which had created great warriors, tradesmen, physicians, sculptors, musicians, and astrologers in ancient India. In modern education also, in the similar way, students acquired management skills, counselling skills, entrepreneurship, and tradesmanship.

4. Situated Learning: New Education for the emerging India focus on the learning experience on the context. The geographical and socio-cultural environment is the platform where learning is situated. The situation can be a natural field or a created one in the school campus. In the ancient Gurukula system also the teachers mainly created an environment wherein the students were gradually exposed to the outside world and its realities. When students raise questions the teacher in Gurukula system used to facilitate certain learning situations where the students explore and experiment to arrive to a knowledge.

5. Memorization: In ancient Gurukula system books were not there, so students had the habit to learn and memorize all the things taught in the class, and teachers also helped them in memorizing. Instruction in grammar and pronunciation was compulsory for all students, which they practiced through repeated recitation. Besides, learning the sacred texts by heart was an essential step in studying the Vedas or holy scriptures. Through this they preserved the Veda mantras (Vedic Hymns) and Richayas (Vedic Verses). 'Samatha' and 'vipassana' are two examples of such recited practice. Repetition and recitation by the teacher and students being an important learning method, scholars of that time were able to memorize thousands of verses (Ghosh, S. C., 2001). The modern information processing theories highlight rehearsal as an elaborative process for enhanced memory. Trial and operant conditioning learning also emphasis on the repetition and rehearsal of concepts. Latest studies on neurological base of learning support recitation and repeated performances as facilitating neural bonds in the brain.

6. Creative Dialogues: Thinking method was a part of the teaching in Gurukula system. Students listen to the teachers and recite, and ask questions, followed by explanation by the teacher. In this oral method correct pronunciation was specially emphasized. Instead of direct explanation teachers ask questions or present problems to solve. Debate, Discussion, and Storytelling were also adopted according to the need. Collaborative learning in modern education involves similar methods such as discussion, seminars, symposium, workshops, and brain

storming. NEP 2020 and NCF 2005 emphasized scientific temper and evidence-based thinking, creativity and innovativeness, problem solving, logical reasoning, coding and computational thinking (MHRD, 2020).

7. Reflective Learning: In Gurukula learning reflective listening was important. Listening involved three steps. The first was Sravana, which meant listening to the texts recited by the teacher. This is how the student absorbs the teacher's knowledge. The second was Manana, which involved deliberation and reflection. The student focused on what has been taught and what they could learn from it. The third step was Nididhyasana, or meditation. Students needed to think and mull over what they read and encounter, and after doing this, they could apply that knowledge better (Raja, CK, 1950).

Manana or reflection was the higher method of teaching than thinking in Vedic system. Through Manana the deeper meanings were developed and preserved in one's own mind. This method was used to encourage the highly intelligent students by guiding them to make research.

New Education for the emerging India proposes reflective learning. Learning is a reflective practice. Reflective learning style consists of absorbing, rather than acting on new information. It involves students thinking about what they have read, done, or learned, relating the lesson at hand to their own lives and making meaning out of the material. It is more than just memorizing some facts, formulae, or data.

8. Sustainable development: NEP 2020 proposes a strong, vibrant public education system as well as the encouragement and facilitation of true philanthropic private and community participation. It focuses on health and nutrition, physical education, wellness, fitness and sports, collaboration and teamwork, environmental awareness, and water and resources conservation.

In the Gurukula concept disciples were also primarily trained on how to preserve the nature and its resources through a sustainable living in order to leave a better planet for the future generations. That is why understanding, preserving, and worshipping the nature were integral parts of Vedic school of education. Living in harmony with the nature was the essence of all rituals of Vedic school of thought. This concept is reflected in modern sustainable development concept and eco-friendly classrooms.

Aim of education

NEP 2020 aims at the all-round development of the personality of the students, preparing them to be globally competent.

Vedic education aimed at Moksha or liberation; a stage of ultimate freedom from all bondages and openness to life experiences. Wholistic development in Vedic education views the harmony of body, mind, and soul. When the body, mind, and soul are synchronized and work in the same direction a person's approach becomes very passionate. The learner, then is able to patiently pursue his efforts with perseverance, and achieves success in his endeavours. The mental exercises of the ancient system could channelize mental energy for the better, following which, other senses and organs become more neutralised.

Role of the teacher

In the modern education the role of the teacher is primarily that of a facilitator, who supports and scaffolds the learning process. The teacher is also a mentor

and counsellor who moves along with the students in their journey of progress. Teachers do not teach concepts but facilitate constructive thinking of concepts.

During the ancient period, the state government and the people did not interfere in designing curriculum, payments of salaries, or regulation of teaching hours. Education was entirely the responsibility of the teachers and the students. There was a strong bonding between teacher and student. Every student was allotted with one teacher and more emphasis was given to the student-teacher relationship; each student used to meet teachers personally to learn and gain instructions from them (Raja, C.K., 1950). The pupils were residing in the house of the Guru or teacher who was like a parent giving full attention on their development. The teacher would admit very limited number of students. Teacher-taught relationship was very cordial and intimate. Like modern school counsellor and mentor, ancient teacher was a main source of inspiration for the student, and was a model before the students. The teachers were discharging their duties and responsibilities exclusively with selfless and single-minded devotion.

Conclusion

The demand and the need for education in the 21st century still remain the same as it was in ancient and medieval times, with the difference that the modern electronic gadgets replaced the ancient tools and instruments, along with the industrial sector increasing day by day. However, the human potential that drive the technology remains unchanged. As in the past, so in the modern education, the students are not just involved in coveting the ranks, but their main focus is on knowledge and enhancement of skills. Social aim of education guides the personal aim; education aims not merely to make creative human being, but to make socially useful creative individuals.

The emerging education in India is the combination of ancient wisdom and modern science and technology. The ancient system was specifically focused on the training of the mind to ensure peace and progress. The modern method of education emphasizing construction of knowledge do focus on the thought rather than the taught, towards the same aim- peace and progress.

Ultimately, the new Education policy of India offers a hope that learning becomes interesting and divergent, with the idea that learning should be child-centric, holistic, integrated, enjoyable, and engaging. Schools are slowly breaking the straitjackets of arts, commerce and science streams in high school, and aiming to introduce vocational courses with internships, as it was almost two thousand years ago. Therefore, with the rise of modern education, the ancient Indian education system is on a revival to add force to mobilize the entire population to take the nation to a realm of wholistic progress.