



Exploring the Impact of Rabindranath Tagore's Naturalist 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.

INTRODUCTION

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Through a synthesis of humanity, nature, and education, Rabindranath Tagore established an educational institution in Santiniketan where students could acquire knowledge in a free environment. According to him, education is incomplete without an understanding of the common people of the country and a connection with nature. Rabindranath believed that the main goal of education should be to foster the natural growth and unhindered development of a child's imagination, along with cultivating self-awareness. Education is the effort to nurture the inner self of a person and mold them into a true human being. In his essay "The Form and Development of the Ashram," naturalistic educational philosophy, centered on freedom, creativity, and a deep connection with nature, has had a profound impact on the development of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Tagore's vision, implemented through his experiments at Santiniketan and Visva-Bharati, resonates strongly with the policy's emphasis on holistic development, experiential learning, and the integration of Indian ethos with modern, 21st-century skills.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE AND HIS EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy centers on holistic development through a harmonious relationship between the individual, nature, and society. He rejected the rigid, "factory-like" colonial schooling of his time, advocating instead for a system that nurtures creativity, emotional well-being, and spiritual growth. Tagore believed nature is the greatest teacher. Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy centres on holistic development through a harmonious relationship between the individual, nature, and society. He rejected the rigid, "factory-like" colonial schooling of his time, advocating instead for a system that nurtures creativity, emotional well-being, and spiritual growth. Tagore believed nature is the greatest teacher. He founded Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan, where classes were held in open-air settings to foster a sense of wonder and connection with the environment.

THE IMPACT OF TAGORE'S EXPERIMENTATION IN INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

Rabindranath Tagore's educational experiments fundamentally challenged the rigid, colonial model of his time, advocating for a system that prioritize creative freedom, holistic development, and harmony with nature. His ideas shifted the focus from rote memorization to experiential learning, a legacy that remains deeply influential in modern reforms like India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Experimentation Tagore's "educational trinity" Santiniketan (the school), Visva-Bharati (the university), and Sriniketan (rural reconstruction) served as living laboratories for his philosophy Tagore believed nature was the best teacher. Classes at Santiniketan were held under trees to foster a spontaneous connection with the environmental Creative. Internationalism (Visva-Bharati) Established in 1921, Visva-



Bharati was designed as a “world university” to bridge Eastern and Western cultures. Tagore emphasized community-based education, integrating vocational training and agriculture to empower rural populations.

The National Education Policy 2020 draws heavily from Tagore’s vision, specifically in its emphasis on multidisciplinary learning, experiential pedagogy, and the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. **Child-Centred Pedagogy:** His critique of “book-centered” education influenced the shift toward student-centered learning and the reduction of textbook-heavy curricula in modern Indian schools. Would you like to explore how specific NEP 2020 policies directly mirror Tagore’s Santiniketan experiments, or perhaps look into his critique of the colonial school system.

INFLUENCE OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE’S IDEA ON NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 reflects the educational philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore by shifting from a colonial-era "rote learning" model to a more holistic, experiential, and learner-centric approach. Tagore’s ideas which he practically implemented at Visva-Bharati and Santiniketan—are mirrored in several of the policy’s core pillars.

Holistic & Multidisciplinary Education: Tagore advocated for a "whole person" approach, integrating arts, music, and nature with traditional subjects like science and math. NEP 2020 aligns with this by removing rigid separations between arts and sciences and promoting a flexible, multidisciplinary curriculum.

Experiential Learning: Tagore’s "Method of Nature" emphasized hands-on discovery over theoretical instruction. The NEP 2020 mirrors this through its focus on activity-based learning, storytelling-based pedagogy, and arts-integrated education.

Mother Tongue Instruction: Tagore was a fervent advocate for using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction to prevent societal rifts and aid cognitive development. This is a central feature of NEP 2020, which recommends teaching in the home language/mother tongue until at least Grade 5.

Global Citizenship & Indian Ethos: Tagore’s vision of Visva-Bharati ("where the world makes a home in a single nest") promoted internationalism rooted in Indian culture. NEP 2020 adopts this by balancing 21st-century global competencies with a strong sense of pride in Indian heritage and Knowledge Systems.

Vocational Education & Self-Reliance: Just as Tagore established Sriniketan for rural reconstruction and skill development, NEP 2020 aims to integrate vocational training from Grade 6 to foster self-reliance and employability.



Teacher as Facilitator: In Tagore's philosophy, the teacher is a guide and friend rather than an authoritative figure. The NEP 2020 emphasizes teacher empowerment, continuous professional development, and giving educators more freedom to design student-centric pedagogy. The policy empowers teachers to play the role of a facilitator and guide, rather than an authoritative figure, in line with Tagore's view on the teacher-student relationship.

Environmental Awareness: Tagore integrated nature into the daily life of students through open-air classes and festivals. The NEP 2020 similarly stresses the importance of environmental conservation and values from a foundational stage.

TAGORES NATURALIST PHILOSOPHY AND NEP 2020

Rabindranath Tagore's naturalist philosophy, which emphasizes learning in harmony with nature, creativity, and freedom, finds a profound resonance in the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020). Tagore's educational experiments at Santiniketan, aiming at the holistic development of the child in a natural setting, are echoed in NEP 2020's focus on experiential learning, interdisciplinary studies, and holistic development.

Nature as Teacher: Tagore believed that education should occur in close proximity to nature, fostering a sense of freedom and wonder.

Holistic Development: Education should nurture the mind, body, and spirit equally. The policy moves towards a holistic, 360-degree assessment of students, recognizing multiple facets of their personality rather than just academic performance.

Freedom of Expression: Tagore advocated for creative self-expression through arts, music, dance, and drama.

Mother Tongue Instruction: He believed that education should be imparted in the child's mother tongue for better understanding and expression.

REFLECTION OF TAGORE'S PHILOSOPHY IN NEP 2020

Joyful Learning: NEP 2020 emphasizes experiential learning, art-integrated education, sports-integrated learning, and storytelling-based pedagogy at all levels, reflecting Tagore's "learning by doing" approach.



Flexible and Multidisciplinary Curriculum: The policy promotes flexibility in choosing subjects and removes the rigid separation between academic, extracurricular, and vocational streams, mirroring Tagore's vision of an integrated curriculum.

Focus on Nature and Environment: NEP 2020 encourages environmental awareness and education from an early age, aligning with Tagore's emphasis on nature-based learning and sustainable living.

Multilingualism: NEP 2020 heavily emphasizes the use of the mother tongue/regional language as the medium of instruction, which was a core tenet of Tagorian philosophy.

Tagore's educational philosophies, including naturalism, humanism, and internationalism, provide a foundational blueprint for many key areas in the NEP 2020, aiming to create a more harmonious, inclusive, and sustainable education system.

Creativity and Critical Thinking: For Tagore, education was not merely about memorization of facts but about fostering creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. He encouraged students to ask questions, explore new ideas, and challenge conventions. He believed in the importance of a free, self-directed learning process where students could pursue their interests and passions. The NEP 2020 advocates for a shift from rote learning to a more inquiry-based, student-centered approach. It emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, creativity, and innovation, ensuring that students develop skills necessary for addressing complex global challenges. This is in line with Tagore's ideals of self-exploration and independent thinking.

Student-Centered Learning: Tagore's educational philosophy was based on the idea of Child-centric education, where the needs and interests of the student were prioritized. Teachers, in his view, were guides and facilitators, not authoritarian figures. Education, For him, was about nurturing the potential of each student and allowing them the Freedom to develop at their own pace. The NEP 2020 advocates for a more personalized and Flexible approach to learning, where students can progress at their own pace, and The curriculum is designed around their individual needs and interests. It Emphasizes the need for a learner-centric approach that Tagore had long Championed.

Integration of Art and Culture: Tagore viewed the arts as central to the development Of the human spirit. He believed that creative expression through music, dance, and Visual arts was essential for emotional and intellectual growth. Education, according to Him, should foster the imagination and artistic sensibilities of students. The NEP 2020 includes strong recommendations for the Integration of arts, culture, and physical



education into the curriculum. It stresses The need for education to nurture creativity, aesthetic appreciation, and the joy of Learning through artistic activities.

Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy redefines the essence of learning by Blending intellect with creativity, freedom, and self-discovery. Unlike rigid academic Structures that confine students to predetermined syllabi, his approach fosters an Organic, experience-driven journey of knowledge acquisition.

CONCLUSION

NEP 2020 represents a modern, structured revival of Tagore's humanist and naturalist educational philosophy. By focusing on holistic, flexible, and learner-cantered approaches, the policy acts as a framework to implement his vision of education a system that liberates the mind and fosters a harmonious relationship with nature and humanity. Rabindranath Tagore's naturalist philosophy—emphasizing nature, creativity, experiential learning, and freedom is deeply embedded in NEP 2020. The policy mirrors Tagore's vision by promoting holistic, multidisciplinary, and joyful learning, abandoning rote memorization, and encouraging connection with the environment, creating a modern, learner-centric, and flexible educational system.

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