



BRIDGING CENTURIES: “KABIGURU” RABINDRANATH TAGORE’S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND ITS RESONANCE WITH NEP 2020

Debanjali Ghosh

Research Scholar

Department of Education, Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi
debanjalighosh2013@gmail.com

Dr. Vijay Kumar Yadav

Assistant Professor

Department of Education, Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi

ABSTRACT

This comparative study explores the bridge between “Kabiguru” Rabindranath Tagore’s educational philosophy and the National Education Policy 2020. Following a descriptive research approach, the researcher aims to find out the core principles of Tagore’s educational philosophy and the basic guidelines outlined in NEP 2020 to draw a convergence between them. By drawing insights from scholarly journals and Government documents, the piece of research explores the potential of Tagore’s educational philosophy in effectively realizing the envisioned goals of NEP 2020. As a result, the study highlights, Tagore emphasized on experiential learning by nurturing creativity and cultivating a connection with nature that resonate aptly with the essence of NEP 2020. Finally, this study concludes that inculcating the spirit of Tagore’s educational philosophy into the adaptation and implementation of NEP 2020 holds immense potential for creating a truly constructive and holistic educational experience for future generations.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Educational Philosophy, NEP 2020, Holistic educational experience



INTRODUCTION

In the realm of educational philosophy, the ideas of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore continue to hold profound relevance, transcending temporal boundaries and resonating with contemporary educational reforms. As India starts to use National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, there is a renewed interest in exploring the synergies between Tagore’s visionary educational principles and the modern policy framework. The enduring significance of Tagore’s holistic approach to education emphasizes the harmonious development of an individual’s physical, mental, and spiritual faculties (Bhattacharya, 2019; Sengupta, 2016). This approach aligns remarkably with the NEP 2020’s focus on multidisciplinary learning and the development of 21st century skills. Tagore’s concept of “Ananda” (Joy in learning) and the NEP’s emphasis on experiential and enjoyable learning go in parallel (Sharma, 2023). Furthermore, Tagore’s ideas on the integration of arts, nature, and cultural heritage in education find echoes in the policy’s thrust on arts- integrated learning and the promotion of India’s rich cultural legacy. The philosopher-poet’s advocacy for mother tongue-based education and multilingualism aligns with the NEP’s three- language formula and emphasis on regional languages (Ghosh, 2015). Additionally, Tagore’s vision of education as a means of fostering global citizenship and intercultural understanding resonates with the policy’s aim to internationalize Indian education (Chakrabarty et al., 2023). For deeper comparative analysis, it becomes evident that Tagore’s educational philosophy, rooted in the early 20th century, offers valuable insights and guiding principles for the implementation of India’s new educational reforms in the 21st century. So, this study intends to explore these connections,



highlighting how the wisdom of the past can inform and enrich the educational practices of the future.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

As India embarks on the purposeful journey of implementing the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, there is a unique opportunity to examine how Tagore’s century-old educational philosophy aligns with and can inform modern educational approaches. This study aims to bridge the gap between historical educational thought and contemporary policy, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Tagore’s ideas in areas such as holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, cultural rootedness combined with global outlook, learner centric education and the integration of arts and nature in learning. Through these connections the research can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators and researchers, potentially enhancing the implementation of the NEP 2020 and contributing to the development of an education system that is both innovative and culturally resonant. Furthermore, this study addresses a gap in the existing literature by offering a comprehensive comparative analysis of Tagore’s educational philosophy and the NEP 2020, thereby contributing to the fields of educational philosophy, history, and policy studies.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify and analyze the key principles and pedagogical practices of Tagore’s educational philosophy.
2. To explore and evaluate the resonance of Tagore’s educational principles and pedagogical practices with the core guiding principles of NEP 2020.



METHODOLOGY

This study typically takes the form of descriptive study and data are collected from Primary data and Secondary data sources both, like, primary data sources include Tagore’s writings that elucidate his educational philosophy, NEP 2020 etc., wherein secondary sources include various Government documents such as admission prospectus and other relevant reports and research publications. Qualitative content analysis approach is followed for this research that involves rigorous reading to identify connection between Tagore’s educational philosophy and NEP 2020 guiding principles.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Objective 1: To identify and analyze the key principles and pedagogical practices of Tagore’s educational philosophy.

A detailed analysis of various sources like Tagore’s writings, and other relevant documents reveals several key principles and pedagogical practices of Tagore’s educational philosophy.

1. **Holistic Education:** Tagore advocated for a holistic approach to education that nurtures the mind, body and spirit. He believed in integrating various subjects like Mathematics, Science, Social Science, literature with Physical Education, Art, music to provide a well-rounded learning experience (Das & Bera, 2020).
2. **Freedom and Creativity:** Central to Tagore’s philosophy was the concept of freedom in education. He emphasized the importance of allowing students to explore and express themselves freely, fostering creativity and independent thinking



(Bhattacharya, 2014). Students’ individual differences are encouraged, and they are inspired to explore their interests and unique talents by their teachers who are rather facilitator than an authoritative figure (Bhattacharya, 2019).

3. **Nature-Centric Learning:** Tagore believed in the contribution of nature as a teacher. He established institutions in Santiniketan under the natural setting. Students here go under sustainable development education and eco-literacy programs by spending time outdoors and observing nature and exploring environment (Lesar, 2023).
4. **Art and Aesthetics:** The role of arts, music and literature in Tagore’s curriculum continues to be relevant. Nussbaum (2010) examines how Tagore’s arts- integrated approach supports creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness, aligning with 21st century skills framework.
5. **Internationalism and Cultural Exchange:** Tagore promoted cross- cultural understanding and global citizenship. He encouraged international exchanges and dialogues in his educational institutions (Mukherjee, 2017).
6. **Experiential Learning:** Hands on experiences and practical activities like, gardening, electric work, craftwork, project- based learning etc. are emphasized in Tagore’s pedagogy. He believed in learning by doing and encouraged students to engage in various activities (Nussbaum, 2010).
7. **Teacher- Student Relationship:** Tagore advocated for a close, respectful relationship between teachers and students. He envisioned teachers as guides and facilitators rather than authoritarian figures (Bhattacharya, 2019).



8. **Mother Tongue Instruction:** Tagore emphasized the importance of education in the mother tongue, believing it to be crucial for cognitive development and cultural identity (Ghosh, 2015).
9. **Community Engagement:** Tagore believed in the importance of connecting education with the wider community. He encouraged students to engage in social service and community development projects (Pridmore, 2009).

Objective 2: To explore and evaluate the resonance of Tagore’s educational principles and pedagogical practices with the core guiding principles of NEP 2020.

By exploring into both core principles of Tagore’s educational philosophy and the guiding principles of NEP 2020, the researchers found an alignment that highlights the enduring relevance of his ideas in contemporary education reform.

Holistic and Multidisciplinary Education:

Tagore advocated for a holistic approach to education that integrates various subjects and activities. He believed in nurturing the complete person- intellectually, physically, and spiritually (Banerjee, 2018). NEP 2020 also emphasizes a multidisciplinary approach, aiming to eliminate rigid distinctions between streams and promote flexibility in curriculum, with the aim to develop critical thinking, versatility, adaptability, problem solving, flexibility and analytical and communication skills in learners (Kalyani, 2020). It proposes a holistic and multidisciplinary education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities and sports (Ministry of Education, 2020). Hence there is a strong alignment between Tagore’s holistic vision and NEP 2020’s multidisciplinary approach. Both emphasize the integration of knowledge across disciplines for comprehensive learning. However, NEP 2020 provides



more structured guidelines for implementation, including the introduction of multidisciplinary Bachelor’s programs and the establishment of multidisciplinary Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

Tagore’s Principle: Tagore envisioned teachers as facilitators rather than authoritarian figures. He advocated for a close, respectful relationship between teachers and students (Bhattacharya, 2014). The policy also emphasizes the role of teachers as facilitators of learning and aims to empower them through continuous professional development. It proposes reforms in teacher education and career management. So, both of them emphasize the facilitative role of teachers, NEP 2020, however, provides more comprehensive guidelines for teacher education, recruitment, and career progression (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Nature- Centric Learning: Tagore believed in the power of nature as a teacher and established the institution in a natural setting, encouraging students to explore nature by staying outdoor, fostering environmental awareness. Open air classes are conducted under the tree (Ghosh, 2015). NEP 2020 also promotes the need of environmental awareness and sustainable development, cultivating a connecting with nature (Ministry of Education, 2020).

Experiential Learning: Tagore promoted hands-on experiences and practical activities in his pedagogy. He believed in learning by doing and encouraged students to engage in various crafts and activities (Visva Bharati Prospectus, 2022). NEP 2020 also advocates for experiential learning, including hands-on experiences, arts-integrated education, sports-integrated learning and story-telling based pedagogy. It emphasizes that classroom transactions will shifting away from content-centric learning to competency- based learning,



where inquiry based, discovery oriented and learner centered approaches will be emphasized rather than rote memorization, emphasizing student engagement and exploration. That helps the learners to be prepared for the rigors of the workplace by bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application (MoE, 2020).

Arts and Creativity: Tagore’s philosophy of education encourages open discussions, free expression of thought, independent views fostering a culture of creativity, problem solving and critical thinking. Integration of arts, music, and literature was crucial in Tagore’s educational approach. He passionately believed that aesthetic experiences were crucial for complete human development (Nussbaum, 2010). NEP 2020 also give importance on “21st century skills”, “higher order thinking skill” to promote creativity and critical thinking by making arts, music as a part of the curriculum. It states that arts integration will be used as a cross-curricular pedagogical approach to enhance learning, aiming to equip students to thrive in a dynamic world (MoE, 2020).

Mother Tongue and Multilingualism: Tagore emphasized the importance of education in the mother tongue, believing it to be crucial for cognitive development and cultural identity (Ghosh, 2015). NEP 2020 also promotes multilingualism and the use of home language/ mother tongue as medium of instruction up to Grade 5, preferably till Grade 8 and beyond by recognizing the purpose of a more structured approach to language education, including the three-language formula. It also emphasizes the learning of Indian languages (MoE, 2020).

Global Citizenship and Indian Ethos: Tagore promoted international and cross-cultural understanding. He encouraged international exchanges and dialogues in his educational



institutions (Mukherjee, 2017). Whereas NEP 2020 also aims to instill a deep-rooted pride in being Indian while also preparing students for global citizenship. It emphasizes the promotion of Indian Knowledge and indigenous and traditional ways of learning (MoE, 2020). So, where Tagore focused on breaking down national barriers by adopting a universal approach, NEP 2020 also seeks to balance global competencies with a strong sense of Indian identity.

Flexible and Student -Centric Learning: Tagore advocated for student autonomy and self-directed learning. He believed in allowing students to explore and express themselves, their talents and interests freely (Das & Bera, 2020). Students. The curriculum is tailored to cater individual needs (Visva Prospectus, 2023). Similarly, NEP 2020 promotes flexible curricula, innovative pedagogies, and choice-based credit systems. It promotes multiple entry and exit points in higher education and emphasizes learner-centered pedagogy (MoE, 2023). The policy aims to create well-rounded individuals with key 21st century skills and recognizes the value of equipping students with relevant skills and values to become active participants in society, fostering their overall growth.

Teacher as Facilitator: Tagore envisioned teachers as guides and facilitators rather than authoritarian figures. He advocated for a close, respectful relationship between teachers and students (Bhattacharya, 2014). Students generally address their teachers as “Dada and Didi”, which shows the closeness of the bond. Parallely the policy emphasizes the role of teachers as facilitators of learning and aims to empower them through continuous professional development. It proposes reforms in teacher education and career management (MoE, 2023).



While these areas reveal significant resonance between Tagore’s educational principles and the core guidelines of NEP 2020. However, Tagore’s creation, Visva Bharati, where his educational philosophy getting shaped everyday functions with unique setting and limited students, while NEP 2020 outlines a policy framework which caters to a large and diverse national education system. And in terms of its implementation NEP 2020 focuses to work on polycyperspective and give less importance to educators and individual institutions.

Findings and Discussion:

The analyses of the of the literature affirms the enduring relevance of Tagore’s educational philosophy. His principles of holistic development, nature centric learning, arts and aesthetics, global awareness, community engagement, etc. offer valuable insights for addressing contemporary educational challenges.

It is also found that, there is a significant resonance between Tagore’s educational principles and the core guidelines of NEP 2020. Both emphasize holistic, multidisciplinary education, experiential learning, arts integration and student centric approaches. However, NEP 2020 provides more structured implementation strategies and places greater emphasis on Indian ethos alongside global citizenship. The alignment suggests that Tagore’s educational philosophy continues to be relevant and can inform the implementation of NEP, 2020. However there are also areas where NEP 2020 goes beyond Tagore’s vision, such as in its approach to multilingualism and its more structured guidelines for implementation.

CONCLUSION



This comparative study is basically an analysis of the National Education Policy 2020, a historic educational reform in Indian education, and Tagore’s educational philosophy. This descriptive study highlights the timeless relevance of Tagore’s visionary ideas. Despite the century that separates them, both share a commitment to holistic, learner centered education that nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. The alignment in areas such as multidisciplinary learning, experiential pedagogy, and the integration of arts underscores the enduring wisdom in Tagore’s approach. However, NEP 2020 also reflects contemporary needs, particularly in its structured implementation strategies and emphasis on Indian ethos alongside global citizenship. This synthesis of Tagore’s timeless principles with modern educational imperatives offers a robust framework for transforming India’s education system. As India embarks on this ambitious reform, drawing inspiration from Tagore’s philosophy can enrich the implementation of NEP 2020, ensuring that education nurtures not just skilled individuals, but compassionate, creative, and globally conscious citizens. Here it is needed to acknowledge that NP 2020 serves as a framework, and its fruitfulness depends on the stakeholders like the policymakers, educators, students etc. The bridge between Tagore’s century- old vision and NEP 2020 thus offers a unique opportunity to create an education system that is both rooted in India’s rich cultural heritage and prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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