

Relevance of Rabindranath Tagore's Education Thoughts in Present Day Scenario

B. B. Barik

Brainware University, Barasat, West Bengal, India.

Email: dean.mas@brainwareuniversity.ac.in

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore's educational thoughts and philosophy emphasised holistic development, creativity, and a connection with nature. He believed education should foster intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth. Tagore founded Visva-Bharati University, promoting experiential learning, arts, and cultural exchange. His curriculum integrated traditional Indian and Western educational elements, aiming for universal humanism. In today's context, Tagore's emphasis on creativity, critical thinking, and holistic education remains relevant. It advocates for an education system that nurtures individuality and global citizenship, addressing contemporary challenges of standardised testing and fostering a more inclusive, empathetic worldview.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Education Philosophy, Thoughts, Curriculum, Relevance in the present day.

Introduction

Education is the fundamental tool for a nation's social, religious, political, and economic transformation and advancement. In the 19th century, educational philosophy largely revolved around rote learning, discipline, and the classical curriculum. Schools focused on memorization and strict adherence to academic standards, with limited emphasis on creativity or critical thinking. Education was often rigid, with a clear hierarchy and little room for individual expression or holistic development.

Rabindranath Tagore born in 1861 in Kolkata, India, in the Tagore family, which was at the forefront of the Bengal renaissance. He was a multifaceted genius, a famous poet, singer, writer, playwright, composer, philosopher, social reformer, artist, and the first non-European Nobel laureate in Literature (1913). Tagore's contributions to education were pioneering. His

views on education were very broad, liberating mind from narrow thinking, freedom of thought, spirit, faith, speech, which will lead to the inner perfection of the self.

He founded Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, envisioning it as a place where the world meets in one nest. His curriculum integrated arts, music, and crafts with traditional subjects, encouraging students to explore and express themselves fully. Tagore's approach was holistic, stressing the importance of understanding nature, culture, and humanity.

His educational philosophy emphasized the harmonious development of the mind, body, and soul, promoting creativity and critical thinking over rote memorization. Tagore believed in learning in a natural environment, fostering a sense of freedom and spontaneity among students.

Rabindranath Tagore become increasingly focused on educational reform to modernise India, as seen by his writings and deeds. Particularly, Tagore's philosophical views on education may be found in a variety of contexts, including the purpose of education, instructional strategies, curriculum design, the interaction between teachers and students, and the teacher's role. According to Tagore, education is meant to help a person in becoming a fully realised man.

This study primarily examines Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy, showing how it transformed each person into a fully developed human being and offering fresh suggestions for the subject of education.

Education serves as a cornerstone for the holistic transformation and progress of a nation across various spheres, including social, religious, political, and economic dimensions. Rabindranath Tagore, a pivotal figure in India's intellectual and cultural landscape, notably pivoted towards educational reform to propel the nation towards modernity. This commitment is evident in both his literary works and practical endeavours. Central to Tagore's educational ideology are multifaceted insights spanning the purpose of education, pedagogical methodologies, curriculum formulation, dynamics within the classroom, and the pivotal role of educators. Tagore contends that education should facilitate the journey towards self-realization, nurturing individuals to attain their fullest potential.

Drawing from theoretical frameworks in educational philosophy, particularly those emphasizing the transformative power of education, Tagore's perspectives resonate with seminal works in the field. For instance, John Dewey's pragmatist philosophy underscores the dynamic nature of learning and the role of education in fostering individual growth and societal progress (Dewey, 1916). Moreover,

Tagore's emphasis on the harmonious development of intellect, emotion, and creativity echoes the holistic educational approach advocated by proponents of humanistic psychology, such as Abraham Maslow (Maslow, 1968).

This study delves into Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy, critically analysing its implications for the cultivation of fully realised human beings. By situating Tagore's ideas within the broader theoretical landscape of educational philosophy, this research endeavours to offer novel insights and recommendations for the advancement of educational discourse and practice.

The characteristics of Tagore's educational philosophy are discussed here:

1. Holistic Education: Tagore's profound emphasis on nurturing the holistic development encompassing the mind, body, and soul stands in resonance with contemporary educational paradigms that champion a multifaceted approach to learning. In today's educational landscape, there is a growing recognition of the imperative to cultivate not only academic prowess but also essential socio-emotional competencies, creative expression, and critical thinking abilities. Tagore's holistic vision of education, therefore, finds profound relevance in the modern discourse, where educators increasingly acknowledge the interconnectedness of cognitive, emotional, and physical dimensions in fostering well-rounded individuals poised for success in an ever-evolving world. Thus, his advocacy for nurturing the mind, body, and soul serves as a timeless beacon guiding educational practices towards a more comprehensive and enriching approach to learning and development. (Gardner, 1983; Goleman, 1995).

2. Individualized Learning: Tagore's unwavering belief in the intrinsic worth of each individual and the imperative to recognize and nurture their unique potential resonates deeply with the

contemporary educational landscape, particularly in light of the burgeoning emphasis on personalized learning and adaptive education technologies. In today's dynamic educational milieu, there is a growing acknowledgment of the diverse learning styles, preferences, and strengths of learners, necessitating a departure from traditional one-size-fits-all approaches. Tagore's advocacy for individualized education underscores the significance of tailoring learning experiences to meet the specific needs and talents of each student, fostering a sense of empowerment and engagement in the learning process. (Khan, 2012; Kozma, 2003).

Moreover, as advancements in technology continue to revolutionize the field of education, the integration of adaptive learning technologies holds promise in providing customized learning experiences that adapt in real-time to the individual learner's pace, preferences, and progress. Tagore's emphasis on recognizing and nurturing individual potential thus finds resonance in the contemporary movement towards harnessing technology to personalize learning experiences, thereby optimizing learning outcomes and fostering a culture of inclusivity and equity in education. Hence, his enduring vision serves as a guiding light in shaping modern educational practices that prioritize the holistic development and fulfillment of every learner's potential.

3. Liberation from Book-Centered Education:

Tagore's insightful critique of memorization-based education serves as a poignant reminder of the limitations inherent in traditional, book-centered approaches to learning. His advocacy for a departure from rote memorization towards more experiential and inquiry-based pedagogies resonates deeply with contemporary educational paradigms that prioritize active engagement, critical thinking, and real-world application.

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, there is a growing recognition of the inadequacies of traditional teaching methods that prioritize

passive absorption of information over deep understanding and meaningful learning experiences. Tagore's call for experiential learning underscores the importance of providing students with opportunities to actively engage with the subject matter, explore their interests, and construct their own knowledge through firsthand experiences. His emphasis on inquiry-based learning aligns with contemporary efforts to foster curiosity, creativity, and problem-solving skills among students. By encouraging learners to ask questions, seek answers, and critically evaluate information, inquiry-based approaches not only promote deeper understanding but also cultivate essential skills for success in the technology driven century. (Dewey, 1938; Bruner, 1960)

In light of these insights, Tagore's critique of memorization-based education serves as a timeless reminder of the importance of embracing pedagogical approaches that prioritize active learning, critical thinking, and experiential exploration. As educators continue to strive for innovation and excellence in teaching and learning, his wisdom remains a guiding beacon, inspiring a shift towards more student-centered, inquiry-driven educational practices that empower learners to thrive in an ever-changing world.

4. Personality Development: Tagore's perspective on education, aiming for the holistic development of individuals, resonates with contemporary notions of education as a comprehensive journey that encompasses cognitive, social, emotional, and moral dimensions. In both Tagore's vision and modern educational paradigms, there's a shared recognition that fostering well-rounded individuals entails nurturing various aspects of their being beyond just academic achievements. This holistic approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of cognitive, social, emotional, and moral facets, aiming to cultivate individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also emotionally resilient, socially adept, and morally grounded. Tagore's insight continues to guide educational

endeavors towards a more encompassing understanding of human development and flourishing in the modern era. (Erikson, 1963; Noddings, 2003).

5. Self-Realization: Tagore's concept of education as self-realization finds resonance with existentialist perspectives emphasizing individual authenticity and self-discovery. In both Tagore's philosophy and existentialist thought, there's a shared emphasis on the journey towards discovering one's true self and living authentically. Education, in this view, is not merely about acquiring knowledge but about uncovering and actualizing one's unique identity and purpose in the world. Tagore's insight into education as a path to self-realization aligns with existentialist notions of personal freedom, responsibility, and the quest for meaning, underscoring the profound significance of inner exploration and self-awareness in the educational journey (Sartre, 1956; Kierkegaard, 1843). Thus, his perspective offers valuable insights for fostering a sense of existential fulfillment and individual empowerment in contemporary educational practices.

6. Intellectual Development: Tagore's focus on intellectual development, characterized by fostering imagination, creativity, and free thinking, aligns with contemporary efforts to cultivate critical and creative thinking skills. In both Tagore's philosophy and modern educational approaches, there's recognition of the importance of nurturing students' capacity for innovative problem-solving, independent inquiry, and imaginative expression. By prioritizing these aspects of intellectual development, educators aim to equip learners with the skills and mindset needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and dynamic world (Robinson, 2001; Sternberg, 2003). Tagore's observations offer timeless insights into the value of cultivating intellectual curiosity and creativity as essential components of education.

7. Love for Humanity: Tagore's advocacy for education fostering universal brotherhood

resonates with contemporary calls for education to promote social justice, equity, and global citizenship. In both Tagore's philosophy and modern educational discourse, there's a shared emphasis on nurturing empathy, understanding, and respect for diverse perspectives and cultures. By cultivating a sense of interconnectedness and shared humanity, education plays a crucial role in fostering inclusive societies and addressing pressing global challenges (Banks, 2008; Levinson, 2005). Tagore's vision underscores the importance of promoting values of tolerance, compassion, and solidarity, aligning with modern efforts to cultivate responsible global citizens who are committed to building a more just and equitable world. His perspective offers enduring insights into the transformative potential of education in advancing principles of social justice, equity, and global solidarity.

8. Physical Development: Tagore's emphasis on physical development aligns with contemporary understandings of the significance of physical education and wellness in promoting overall well-being. In both Tagore's philosophy and modern perspectives on education, there's a recognition of the interconnectedness between physical health and academic success, emotional well-being, and personal fulfillment (Sallis et al., 2012;). By prioritizing physical education and wellness initiatives, educators aim to instill lifelong habits of physical activity, healthy living, and self-care among students (CDC, 2020). Tagore's advocacy for the integration of physical development into the educational curriculum underscores the importance of nurturing the whole individual, encompassing not only intellectual but also physical and emotional dimensions.

9. Teaching - Practical and Real: Tagore's emphasis on practical and authentic teaching corresponds with contemporary views on experiential learning and the importance of real-world application in education. In both Tagore's philosophy and modern educational practices,

there's a shared recognition of the value of hands-on, experiential learning that engages students in meaningful activities and real-world contexts (Kolb, 1984;). By prioritizing authentic learning experiences, educators aim to foster deeper understanding, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among students. Tagore's advocacy for practical teaching methods underscores the importance of connecting learning to students' lived experiences and encouraging active participation in the learning process. (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

10. Integration of Arts and Sciences: Tagore's advocacy for integrating arts and sciences resonates with modern efforts to promote interdisciplinary approaches to education, fostering creativity and innovation. In both Tagore's philosophy and contemporary educational discourse, there's a recognition of the synergistic relationship between the arts and sciences in nurturing holistic learning experiences. By bridging disciplinary boundaries and encouraging cross-pollination of ideas, interdisciplinary education cultivates creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills essential for addressing complex real-world challenges (Johnson, 2010). Tagore's emphasis on the integration of arts and sciences underscores the importance of fostering a well-rounded education that nurtures both analytical and creative capacities in students. (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018).

11. Connection with Nature: Tagore's emphasis on the bond between education and nature resonates with contemporary appeals for environmental education and sustainable practices. Both Tagore's philosophy and modern educational discourse recognize the vital importance of nurturing a profound understanding and appreciation of the natural world. By incorporating nature-based learning experiences into the curriculum, educators strive to instill environmental awareness, ecological literacy, and

a sense of responsibility in students (UNESCO, 1977). Tagore's advocacy for the relationship between education and nature underscores the significance of experiential learning in natural environments, which not only enhances academic understanding but also fosters personal well-being and environmental consciousness (Sterling, 2001).

12. Global Citizenship: Tagore's visionary perspective on education, which prioritizes the development of global citizenship, resonates profoundly with contemporary educational agendas focused on fostering intercultural competence and raising awareness of global challenges. For Tagore, education was not merely about acquiring knowledge but also about nurturing a deep appreciation for the richness of diverse cultures and viewpoints. He believed that through education, individuals could develop empathy, respect, and a sense of interconnectedness with people from all corners of the globe.

In today's increasingly interconnected world, characterized by rapid globalization and transnational issues, the importance of promoting global citizenship has become ever more imperative (UNESCO, 2014). Educators are increasingly recognizing the need to equip students with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to thrive in a diverse and interconnected global community. This includes fostering intercultural competence—the ability to communicate effectively and collaborate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds—and cultivating a sense of responsibility towards addressing global challenges such as climate change, poverty, and social injustice (Deardorff, 2009).

13. Emphasis on Ethics and Morality: Tagore's emphasis on moral and ethical development aligns with contemporary initiatives to integrate character education and values-based learning into the curriculum. His belief in the importance of cultivating virtues and ethical reasoning echoes modern educational goals aimed at fostering

students' moral and ethical growth (Lickona, 1991). By integrating character education into the curriculum, educators aim to instill values such as integrity, empathy, and social responsibility in students, preparing them to navigate ethical dilemmas and contribute positively to society (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). Tagore's perspective offers valuable insights into the enduring importance of character education in shaping individuals of integrity and moral conscience.

14. Collaborative Endeavor: Tagore's emphasis on collaborative learning resonates with modern views on the significance of community engagement and partnerships in education. His belief in the transformative power of collective endeavor aligns with contemporary educational approaches that prioritize collaboration among students, educators, parents, and the wider community (Vygotsky, 1978). By fostering collaborative learning environments, educators aim to leverage the diverse strengths and perspectives within the community to enrich the educational experience and address complex challenges (Wenger, 1998). Tagore's vision underscores the importance of building strong partnerships between schools and their communities, recognizing that collective effort is essential for fostering holistic development and achieving educational goals.

Rabindranath Tagore was a visionary thinker, so he challenged these conventions and traditions with his progressive educational philosophy. He emphasized the harmonious development of mind, body, and soul, advocating for a learning environment that nurtured creativity, curiosity, and a deep connection with nature. Tagore believed that education should be a joyous process, fostering a love for learning rather than mere academic achievement. He founded Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, which embodied his ideals, integrating arts, music, and crafts into the curriculum and promoting an interdisciplinary approach.

Conclusion

Tagore's educational ideals remain profoundly relevant today. In an era of standardized testing and rigid curricula, his emphasis on creativity, critical thinking, and holistic education offers valuable insights. Modern education systems worldwide can draw inspiration from Tagore's model to foster more rounded and innovative individuals. His belief in the interconnectedness of education, nature, and culture continues to inspire contemporary educational reforms aiming for a more inclusive and enriching learning experience.

Overall, Tagore's educational thought continues to inspire educators and policymakers worldwide, offering valuable insights into creating educational systems that are not only academically rigorous but also humane, inclusive, and conducive to the holistic development of individuals. Thus, it is concluded that the teaching and methodologies of Tagore still have relevance and great applicability in the present era of the education system being practiced in our country and even around the globe.

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Contributor

Prof. (Dr.) B. B. Barik

Dean, School of Medical & Allied Health Sciences, Brainware University, West Bengal, India.