

Reflection of Rabindranath Tagore's Educational Philosophy on Pre-primary and Primary Education of National Education Policy and Practice in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore showed multifarious skills as a poet, storyteller, novelist, playwright, lyricist, singer, composer, painter, educator, essayist, and philosopher in his vibrant, long and successful career. Although his words about education were spoken centuries ago, they are still surprisingly contemporary. His thoughts on child education make us think anew. His educational concepts and theories are the core of child development, present in the National Education Policy of Bangladesh. In the following paper, an attempt will be made to evaluate the reflection of his philosophy on the pre-primary and primary levels of the existing Educational Policy of Bangladesh. Secondary sources were used to collect data for the study, which was analysed qualitatively. The research methodology employed here includes historical approaches. According to him, the cornerstone of a perfect human future is laid in childhood. Therefore, he believes that education should be simple, child-centric, basic, simple, modern, mother language based, independent, joyful, scientific, technical, fearless, and in a natural environment. Tagore's educational and philosophical ideas can be used to help children develop their spiritual, moral, and aesthetic values, as well as their academic abilities when they are implemented into educational policy. It is widely visible in the pre-primary and

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primary stages of the education policy of Bangladesh which is vastly commendable in terms of an efficient education system.

Keywords: Rabindranath Tagore, Education, Educational Philosophy, Educational Practices, Pre-primary Education, Primary Education, Child Development, National Education Policy-2010.

Introduction

“At first, children must gather knowledge through their life, and it is their first love. All its colour and movement attract their eager attention, and then they will renounce their lives to gain knowledge”- Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath was an Indian at heart, but he did not consider himself to be a member of any specific race or community intellectually. He was perpetually the spokesperson or the voice for all of humanity (Md. Saiful 2012, 11). Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengali philosopher and educator, exposed the world to his educational theory at the dawn of the twentieth century, sparking a new era of revolutionary reform. His passion for the educational system stems from his own traumatic school experiences as a child (Abdullah 2006, 119). Later, his ideas on education were expanded upon, published in important works, and used to influence educational reform in a number of settings.

His thoughts are a synthesis of Eastern and Western perspectives (Danes 2019, 285-292; Nisha and D.S. 2016, 69-72). According to him, every human being possesses a great soul with the capacity to grow into a superhuman being of the universal soul, but this can only be accomplished through education. He argues that the primary goal of education is to provide people with the tools they need to achieve their own personal fulfilment. A country's educational system should be capable of fostering the holistic development of its citizens, placing equal value on the acquisition of theoretical as well as practical skills (Nisha and D.S. 2016, 69-72).

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As a child, he did not participate in the conventional educational system. His education was taken care of by a private tutor who came to his house. From an early age, he never showed any interest in pursuing a conventional education. Rabindranath wrote in his book *Jibansmriti* that during the short amount of time, he spent in school, the lessons, the environment, and the school days seemed to him like "a daily allotment in the mouth."

Children represent the most precious resource available to the common people. When the painter Ananda Kumar Swamy saw Rabindranath's works, he had the impression that the artist had depicted the world as seen through the eyes of a child (Md. Saiful 2012, 10).

Even though Rabindranath presented several concepts and perspectives on education centuries ago, his influence is still noticeable in Bangladesh's contemporary education policy. His thoughts on education make us think anew. Tagore's approach to education is based on four key principles: naturalism, humanism, internationalism, and idealism (Ankhi 2021, 3984-3987; Thriveni 2018).

Bangladesh's first education policy was implemented 49 years after independence. The country's first education commission, led by Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda, a prominent scientist and educator, was formed shortly after independence to formulate education policy. After extensive scrutiny, the Commission formulates a people-oriented modern and science-based education policy, which also reflects many aspects of Rabindranath's philosophy of education. However, Dr. Kudrat-e-Khuda's proposed education policy was not implemented. After that, work on the Education Policy 2000 got back on track, but it wasn't released until the end. Shortly after taking responsibility, the government initiated the formulation and implementation of an education policy. In less than four months, National Professor Kabir Chowdhury and Dr. Kazi Khaliqzaman Ahmed, co-chairman of the 18-member Education Policy Making Committee, drafted an education policy. Extensive publicity-based discussions are reviewed. Through various seminars and discussion meetings, opinions are gathered.

Incorporating the opinions, recommendations, and suggestions of people from all walks of life, including educators, teachers, students, parents, politicians, scholars, businessmen, investors, and professionals, the draft of the National Education Policy-2010 was finalised. This was done with the intention of developing the next generation into a human resource that was knowledgeable in both knowledge and technology, as well as being inspired by moral values, national tradition, and the spirit of the liberation war. Religion, science, and technical education have been given priority in this policy, which is an important aspect. It emphasises human instincts and the provision of life-sustaining education in the world, which will open the door to employment opportunities.

The objectives of Education for All (EFA), as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and other international declarations, have been fully complied with by this Policy (UNESCO 2018). It is divided up into a total of 28 chapters. The second chapter covers pre-primary and primary education, also known as the first two levels of formal education. Pre-primary and Primary education are considered to be the basic levels of education.

Pre-primary education is the cornerstone of an individual's education, which begins in infancy (Samir and Goutam 2018, 1-27). Pre-primary education is a fun education system at the preparatory level for children that prepares them to accept and adapt to their future primary education stage and reduces school fear (Sabina and Mahbuba 2020, 251). It is an early preparation of schooling 5+ children and subsequently, it will also be expanded to children aged 4 and older to make them a source for the nation's growth as well as monumental for the cognitive, mental, and other development of children (National Education Policy 2010, 11).

Primary education is vital to our national existence. Primary education is the foundation for developing skilled citizens and a means of incorporating the entire population into the educational system. Consequently, equal opportunities will be created to ensure that all classes of children have access to primary education, regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, physical or mental disabilities, or geographic location. It

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is the state's constitutional responsibility (Kamrunnesa and Salma 2000, 34-61). Primary education in Bangladesh is provided free of charge to all children in accordance according to Article 17 of the Bangladesh Constitution. (Abdul et al. 2015, 131-222). Primary education will now last for a total of eight years instead of the current five, taking students all the way through eighth grade. Meeting the requirements for the necessary infrastructure and locating an adequate number of teachers are the two primary challenges that must be overcome in order to put this into effect (National Education Policy 2010, 13).

The following are the study's objectives:

1. To analyse Rabindranath Tagore's educational ideas and his fundamental view of education.
2. Evaluate the reflection of his philosophy on the pre-primary and primary levels of the existing National Educational Policy 2010.

Research Methodology

This investigation typically takes the form of historical approach with analytical and descriptive study. Within this section of the research for Tagore's biography, the historical method is utilised. An investigation of people's lives through the lens of history is impossible without also taking into account the ways in which those people engaged with the ideas, movements, and institutions of their eras. The focus serves only to establish the focal points toward which historians direct their attention (Best et al. 2014, 73). In this study, the educational philosophical ideas proposed by Tagore are analysed using analytical methodology. Analytical research is a specialised form of research that requires analytical thinking skills as well as the evaluation of facts and information pertinent to the research that is being carried out. Through analytical research, an individual is able to discover essential particulars that allow them to contribute new ideas to the content that is being produced (Mohanlal Sukhadia University). In order to demonstrate how Tagore's educational and philosophical ideas reflect Bangladesh's National Education policy, a

descriptive study is used. A descriptive study examines, explains, and describes the current situation. It is concerned with conditions or relationships that currently exist, opinions that are held, processes that are currently taking place, effects that are evident, or trends that are currently developing. It is primarily concerned with the present, but it frequently takes into account events from the past that have an influence on how they relate to the current condition. (Best et al. 106).

Thus this study was based entirely on theoretical concepts, the qualitative analysis of the research data involved the collection of information from secondary sources. Intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thoughts, and emotions can be obtained using qualitative methods rather than more conventional approaches (Creswell and Creswell 2018, 11). I have gathered secondary data from scholarly works such as books, research articles, journals, and electronic papers that were written about Tagore and by Rabindranath Tagore.

Tagore's Educational Philosophy and its Reflection on Pre-primary and Primary Education of National Education Policy

A good education can help children develop a sense of fairness and responsibility, as well as a sense of civic responsibility and etiquette. It can also help children develop a liberal outlook, respect for human rights, an understanding of the challenges faced by businesses, and a thirst for knowledge and friendship. They need to be ready to devote their lives to nation-building, arousing the national liberation movement's conscience, and instilling a sense of patriotism in its members. According to Rabindranath Tagore, the goal of life is the goal of education- the overall development of the student. He did not just talk about the development of the brain. He spoke of the full development of the body, mind, and heart of the students. It is very important for the child to come forward from an early age to develop into a real human being. Adequate leisure should be given for the independent management of thinking and imagination from childhood, not just putting all the dawn on memory (Rabindranath 2010, 7-19).

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The issue of creating curricula and textbooks inspired by the national consciousness, has been mentioned with the aim of building humanitarian values. It is also mentioned that for the healthy physical and mental development of the children, a beautiful and joyful environment should be created in the school. Prior to beginning formal schooling, the pre-primary education curriculum in child development will be aimed at instilling in children a sense of discipline and encouraging them to develop their subtle senses (National Education Policy 2010, 11). Rabindranath wanted the environment for children to be educated, completely fear-free and burden-free. He spoke of giving children free rein so that education does not become a mental burden on the child. There is no greater burden than lifeless learning in childhood; it crushes out much more than it gives to the mind. For this reason, he denies the confined environment of the concrete building of the traditional school, the threat of the master, the tenacity of the ten-four rules, the fear of the examination system, the memorized learning method, etc. He aspired to raise his children in an environment that was as close to the natural world as possible. It didn't matter that school followed the conventional schedule here. It was decided based on the student's wants and needs. There is no joy in continuing one's education from childhood. The students are merely learning the essential information by heart. In this manner, only the minimum passing requirements are fulfilled, but no development is gained (Rabindranath 2010, 7-19).

Rabindranath Tagore vehemently opposed the idea of children receiving a primarily academic education through the use of books. For him, the issue is more complex than simply restricting children to the confines of classrooms and textbooks. A student's natural instincts will be smothered and he will become bookish as a result. They lose their ability to think creatively if they do this. As a result, students should be liberated from a curriculum centred around the textbook and provided with more options for learning.

There will be a variety of ways to teach preschoolers, including the use of images, colours and other easy and exciting teaching materials: models, rhymes, stories, songs, games and handicrafts (National Education Policy 2010, 11). Rabindranath was concerned about giving the children a thorough education on the non-verbal level in addition to the usual conventional education on the level of words. Psychological, emotional, imaginative,

and non-rational aspects of human nature are all included in what is known as the non-verbal side of human beings. He wanted the best of both worlds, so he built Shantiniketon to meet those needs. His dedication to educating children in the arts through music, dance, and the visual arts was admirable. (Huxley 1960, 129-232). He placed high value on one's capacity to make complete and independent use of one's body. He asserted that it was important to free children from confinement so that they could experience the elements freely, including getting wet in the rain and getting sunburned in the sun. After that, one's senses will be sharp, and their body will be healthy. In his ashram, he encouraged regular physical activity and made it a point to organize a number of different sports (Ram 2017, 150-160).

It is not possible to educate all children in Bangladesh in primary school due to economic, geographical, and regional constraints, according to the National Education Policy 2010. To this purpose, initiatives will be taken to create at least one primary school in all the villages where there is no primary school. Rabindranath also focused great emphasis on the integration of village community and education. He undertook a number of initiatives in this direction. Education will not be limited to the city. He thought of developing rural infrastructure, economy and society through education. Sriniketan was established with this specific goal.

The mother tongue was neglected in the colonial school system. Rabindranath Tagore could not accept it. He was an outspoken opponent of foreign language immersion as a means of acquiring a foreign culture. As a result, students are unable to grasp the core meaning of a subject when learning it in a foreign language. Furthermore, students must put forth so much effort to learn a foreign language that they are unable to grasp the gist of the material. As a result, education becomes "intelligible" to them, boring, understandable and monotonous. It is mentioned in National Education Policy that all children in Bangladesh as well as indigenous and small ethnic groups should be able to receive primary education in their native tongue (National Education Policy 2010, 12). He penned a two-volume book titled "Sahajpath" with the intention of making it less difficult for children to learn the Bengali alphabet. The alphabet could now be learned through the use of rhymes and pictures.

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Real education was the goal of his life while visiting Russia in 1930, he said. He aimed to cultivate a person's entire personality, as well as their capacity for activism (Subhamoy 2014, 14). To ensure that children are able to progress to the next level of education and meet the requirements of their basic education, steps should be taken to effectively ensure that students acquire the necessary knowledge based on particular subjects, life skills, attitudes, values, and a sense of social awareness. A quality primary education system is necessary, as it serves as the foundation for the next level of education. Since many students seek employment after this stage, a solid elementary education will better prepare them for the job market (National Education Policy 2010, 12).

The children of Bengal suffer from malnutrition because there is not enough food available. In his dissertation titled "Sikkhar Herfer," he asserts that there are certain prayers addressed to the Creator, including requests to unite food and hunger, clothing and winter, language and the mind, and life and education (Rabindranath 2010, 12). It is of the utmost significance that schools provide lunch for the children. Free admission, free education materials, free lunch, and scholarships will be provided as part of the special arrangements that will be made to bring and keep children who have dropped out of school, children living on the street, and other children from disadvantaged backgrounds in primary schools. They will be protected in schools by means that are both efficient and effective (National Education Policy 2010, 6-7).

Beginning in Class VI and continuing through Class VIII, children will participate in pre-vocational education in order to foster an appreciation for manual labour and to introduce them to the concept of vocational education (National Education Policy 2010, 13). Thus, Tagore's philosophy of vocational education as a means of securing one's means of subsistence has been incorporated into the educational system of Bangladesh. The children's potential for future employment will also increase as a result of this measure's assistance in capacity building.

Rabindranath had a lot of passion and love for science and his footsteps in the field of science are significant (Arupratan 1990). In order to make science accessible to the general public, he conducted science studies and wrote about it in a language that anyone could understand. He is the author of the book *Bishwa Parichay*, which is about science.

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This book at the time provided an account of the most recent developments in contemporary science (Rabindranath 1940). In addition, it embellished that description with the right amount of wonderful literary touch to strike the right balance (Abdullah 2006, 119-129). It is essential that children be provided with education in areas such as science and culture and that they be encouraged to grow as individuals free from prejudice (National Education Policy 2010, 12).

“A teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame”– Rabindranath Tagore.

Placing teachers above the method of teaching Tagore said that Teachers' duties and responsibilities should be given the utmost importance because education is so essential. To instil a passion for learning in the students, teachers must know that they must model the way they live their lives in order to serve as role models for them. Teachers of high calibre will be procured in sufficient numbers. The development of physical infrastructure, a pleasant social climate, an excellent educational system, a warm teacher-student relationship and respect for the dignity of women must also be ensured in this country (National Education Policy 2010, 12).

Education is essential to the emancipation of the nation. Indulging in nationalism may seem like a simple way to liberate the country, but in reality, this is a very difficult task to accomplish (Rabindranath 2014, 106-109). The child needs to be encouraged to develop patriotism and contribute to the development of the nation by having the spirit of the war of liberation instilled in them (National Education Policy 2010, 12). It is not only necessary to know the country in the scriptures, moreover, it is necessary to master it through direct knowledge. This direct knowledge will be the real education for the children which will have the power to enrich the country in new ways. The nationalism of Bengali is the path that leads to the throne of success. It is essential to develop the vigour of the nationalist students who are currently enrolled. When compared to the power of the nation as a whole, the loss of personal gain is extremely insignificant. Every assignment that needs to be turned in at school must be completed with only the importance of one's own religion and one's own nation in mind (Rabindranath 2010, 56).

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In order to assist the child in acquiring moral and spiritual qualities such as a sense of justice, sense of duty, discipline, etiquette, non-communal attitude, human rights, the mentality of coexistence, curiosity, love, friendship, perseverance, etc., preparations should be made to help the child acquire these qualities (National Education Policy 2010, 12). The Ministry of Religious Affairs is currently running educational programmes in mosques, temples, churches, and pagodas that aim to teach religious teachings alongside alphabetical knowledge and modern education alongside moral lessons (National Education Policy 2010, 11). Rabindranath evolved into a spiritual thinker in his later years. In Tagore's educational philosophy, moral and spiritual training were emphasized. When it comes to developing a child's character, moral and spiritual education is more important than academic knowledge. Children in educational institutions should be able to engage in activities that promote selflessness, cooperation, and a sense of community and belonging without feeling isolated. He shared the views of others on the topic of humanity and remarked that it is a wonderful thing that the Creator is in man (Rabindranath 1966).

Reconsideration

Even though we can see Tagore's philosophy reflected in our system today, there are certain aspects of his philosophy that need to be re-examined. Tagore's educational philosophy places an excessive amount of emphasis on the spiritual growth of the young learner. The pursuit of this goal is more ascetic and monastic in nature. It is possible that it is not appropriate for the fast-paced, technologically advanced world that we live in today.

Both Tagore's philosophies and the national system of education acknowledge the important role that teachers play in the lives of their students. It also discusses their competitive emoluments and training, but unfortunately, the data show that in practice, they are paid minuscule wages, and the scope of their training is also limited. This is something that is discussed in the article. They have very little of a voice, and they are nothing more than wage labourers. Students' academic performance suffers as a direct result of teachers' low morale and inability to properly instruct them. As a result, the worth and respect of a teacher are falling victim to this trend. The relationships between the

teacher and the students also have an effect on the children's ability to learn. During the learning process, the teacher frequently takes on a more authoritative role, while the student maintains a more submissive stance.

As a result of the fact that classrooms in a natural setting may not be feasible in all regions of the country, the national system of education mandates that classroom learning should be supplemented with either practical experiences or productive work that is socially useful. As a result, the child's ability to learn from their natural environment and develop their natural senses is constrained. In addition, in order for these sorts of actions to yield results, the adults who guide the children in them need to have high intellectual and spiritual capacities. Also, it's possible that such large open spaces won't be available, and as a result, the educational system in Bangladesh is structured with buildings, furniture, and the like.

How do we analyse and judge the development of a child's moral values in an education system that is geared toward getting good grades? How can a child develop their natural senses and enable self-realisation and self-determination in themselves? These are some of the important questions that come up in an education system that is oriented toward getting good grades. Because of the excessive amount of competition and the excessive amount of pressure placed on the children and the teachers to perform well, rote learning and cramming have become commonplace.

There are a number of additional indicators that all play a very important part in the education system that is in place in the modern day. The funding that is used to run the schools, including grants and aids, the administration, the involvement of the community and the government, and other topics on which Tagore's philosophy does not show a clear picture. Instead of focusing solely on becoming the Universal Man, which is the ultimate reality, the purpose of education in today's world is more on the practical side of things.

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Conclusion

Rabindranath Tagore's contribution to the field of child development and education cannot be overstated. His child education philosophy policy was very significant and deeply integrated into the National Education Policy of Bangladesh, but it was not effectively implemented in the schools. Many of Rabindranath's views on education in independent Bangladesh centred on efforts to improve education reform. This reform process is neither smooth nor swift. Government goals and reform strategies may not always align with school requirements and learning environments for children's education. This is frequently due to a lack of educational space, a large number of students in the classroom, the absence of reference materials, a dearth of educational resources, and the absence of educational technology for children. Due to these organisational and financial concerns, many primary and pre-primary teachers have vehemently opposed any educational reform in Bangladesh. On the other hand, many new classrooms attempt to implement new teaching techniques without understanding the theory and fundamental principles underlying them, resulting in radical change. Followers of Rabindranath's educational philosophy should therefore consider curriculum-related teaching methods, school rules and regulations, the role of the teacher, and the role of the school. This document makes no mention of Rabindranath, despite the fact that post-war Bangladeshi schools have a tendency towards modernization of the educational system. However, Rabindranath's philosophy has not lost its relevance or utility for Bangladeshi children and early childhood educators, and if read carefully and extensively, it provides a timeless lesson on how to improve current school practices. In fact, the seed he sowed at the beginning of the twentieth century is still bearing fruit and being valued.

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