

Origins of alternative education in india education essay



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According to one of the view, education has been derived from the Latin word *educare* which means to bring up or to raise. According to this view, education is process of imparting to an individual certain information and knowledge which was considered by the society. Education implies the modification of the behaviour of the individual by imposing standards of society upon him. Thus, this derivation gives the concept of teacher-centred rather than child-centred education.

There is another group of thinkers who believes that the term 'education' has been derived from the Latin word '*educere*' which means to 'lead out' or 'to draw out'. Education therefore, means to lead out or draw out the best in man. It is the process of 'drawing out from within' rather than 'imposing from without'.

In the Indian Context the Education means

The Indian Synonyms of Education are the words '*Shiksha*' and '*vidya*'. *Shiksha* is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root '*Shas*' which means to 'discipline' 'to control' 'to instruct' or 'to teach'. Similarly *Vidya* is also derived from Sanskrit verbal root '*vid*' which means 'to know'. Hence the disciplining the mind and acquisition of knowledge have always been the dominant theme in Indian approaches to understanding the education.

Experimental learning

The experimental education is an organic and constantly evolving approach to learning . According to them they believe that 'anyone can do it'. The ideas advocated can be replicated almost anywhere, and can be used, as some are doing, in mainstream (government and private) schools.

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This type of pedagogy helps in Enhancement in Education. It explores the ways in which children can discover their own talents and interest, at their own talents and interest, at their own places, in their own ways, assisted by teachers, parents, and friends and others-learning in and from their neighbours, their village, their community and the environment in which they live. It tells that how education can be successful in terms of child's own need for knowledge. This kind of education therefore relies heavily on experiential learning which compiles of innovative approaches, method, and idea of learning, aim to be child centred).

The relevant and liberating education should include:-

Being child-focussed- the child is the centre. The child dictates the pace and interests.

Allowing learning in multiple ways.

Enhancing the senses through learning.

Not being exclusive, there is a (government-prescribed) examination for school completion, nor it should exclusive in the terms of class, gender, caste or religion.

Meeting a child's life -enriching needs in compliance with child rights, imparting spiritual values, knowledge of moral, social norms and duties and finally, it should try out to meet life-development needs of functional training of innate talents, and vocational education.

The importance of education being child-centred, starting from what the child knows and is interested in, and at the pace preferred by the child.

Now Approach to primary education has been formally accepted not only by the one country but also by the whole world including the developed and under developing countries as a human right for almost half a century. Yet, today even we enter into the era of 21st Century; there is only about three-quarters of children of school-going children are able to attend a primary school. In a developing countries large number drop-out of children took place before reaching Class V and there are many others who are never able to reach schools. Although the country like India in which the government had placed a high priority on education in policy statements, every time fails because of proper implementation is lacking in the policy. Thus an India stand with 30 per cent of the world's illiterates has female literacy rates much lower than in sub-Saharan Africa [PROBE 1999]. The world's largest number of children who are out-of-school is reached the mark which is close to 59 million are in India, out of which 60 percent are girls (Human Development Report 2000, UN). 37 percent of the children from India are unable to reach Class V [Haq and Haq 1998]. And this despite the Directive Principles in Article 45 of the Indian Constitution which prescribes that the state shall try to provide, within a tenure of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they reach the age of 14. Although after this decision the number of primary schools has increased 2.82 times since 1951 and enrolments have improved, the responsibility of the government for creating a satisfactory infrastructure has in practice not been matched by

corresponding out-lays which continue to remain woefully inadequate at around 3 per cent of the GDP. The vast number of maze of literature on primary education in India has identified various reasons for its abysmal state; why children drop out and why they remain un enrolled or not going in the school. In this space several studies have been done which indicated that the poor quality of schooling is responsible for low retention [Colclough 1993; Bhatti Kiran 1998; PROBE 1999; Banerji 2000; Dreze and Gazdar 1996]. However, most of these studies look at the problem of education within the confines of the classroom. They tend to ignore or underplay the fact that besides poor quality, demotivated or un interested teachers and inadequate infrastructure, there are larger other structural constraints which impede access of children to schools. There are several literature written on primary education in India also reveals that access and retention remain problem areas in this sphere.

Origins of Alternative Education in India

History Overview

The present mainstream educational system was inaugurated in India in the mid-nineteenth century. Over the next century; it almost completely supplanted earlier educational institutions. There had, earlier, been a wide network of small village schools- pathsahlas, gurukuls and madarasas. There was a concept of 'One Village-One School' and was become the norm in various parts of the country, up to the earlier nineteenth century. A large number of such learning schools-reportedly100, 000 was just in Bihar and Bengal. They played important social role and 'were, in fact watering holes of culture of traditional communities'. (Dharampal, 2000). Students from

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various castes studied in these schools, although there was no such discrimination on the basis of castes, creed and colour. It was open for all but there must have been disproportionately representation in the school, the boys outnumbered girls. Most of the girls learnt a range of skills within their homes; from parents, relatives, and private tutors- including Arts, crafts, practical skills, agriculture, health and languages. Harking back to the tradition of monasteries and ashrams, schools interspersed training in practical life skills with academic education. As the time goes on within the overall context of decline of local economies, these went into decline and decay under colonial rule. Intentionally the policy was employed by the government to wipe out this community based schooling, and replace it with an alien model.

In 1931, Gandhi alleged that 'today India is more illiterate than it was 50 or a 100 years ago' (M. K. Gandhi 1931, Dharampal 2000). He also added that British administrators had '.... scratched the soil and begun to look at the root, and left the root like that and beautiful tree perished.' Indigenous education was replaced by an alien and rootless, deliberately set up, as it was explained by Lord Macaulay (1835), to 'form a class who interprets between us and the millions we govern.

Despite the transfer of power in 1947, Indian schools continued in the same mould. Some changes were introduced: the government expanded its reach and network of schools in both rural and urban areas and local vernacular languages were accepted as medium of instruction in these schools. Today we have vast network and number of government in our country and

growing number of private run institutions. Yet, the basic format remained
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the unchanged, a large number of school today based on derivative and mechanistic model. They are designed to produce individuals who fit into modern society and its (Consumerist and competitive) Values, and are easy to govern since they learn to be highly disciplined within hierarchical, centrally administered institutions. Schooling thus, tends to reinforce social inequalities-Class, caste and gender. Affluent Children go to privately run schools, while poor attend schools run by the state because for poor access to private school has become the dream.

Despite of Vital differences in facilities and funding, all these schools share a similar ethos. The ascent is on absorbing information rather on original thinking and imagination. The set up is centralised and bureaucratic, teachers distanced from students mostly merely doing a job, while school act as a delivery points for a set curriculum and content. Schools generate 'failures' in large scale-contributing to crises of confidence at national level.

Early Pioneers

Alternative or the experimental learning to the educational system began to emerge as early as the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century's. Some of these efforts really mark a significant change and their efforts are still visible. Social reformers began exploring alternative education by the late of nineteenth century. Swami Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati, Syed Ahmed Khan, Jyotiba Phule, Savitribai Phule and others promoted the idea of education as a force for social regeneration, and set up schools/institutions toward this end. Vivekananda and Dayanand Saraswati combined religious revitalisation with social service/ political work, through the Rama krishna Mission and Arya Samaj Schools respectively. Syed Ahmed Khan set up the <https://assignbuster.com/origins-of-alternative-education-in-india-education-essay/>

Aligarh Muslim University (originally, Mohammadan Anglo Oriental College), with the goals of imparting modern education without compromising on Islamic Values. Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule were actively concerned with overcoming the social inequalities. They mainly work with the dalit children and girl schooling in Maharashtra.

There were some Significant educationists emerges in half of the twentieth century included Rabindra Nath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Jiddu Krishnamurthy, Gijubhai Badheka And Sri Aurobindo. By the mid of the 1920s and 1930s, these stalwarts had created the number of viable models of alternative learning, as a considered response to the ills of mainstream education. Some of the ideas were in alliance with the struggles for national Independence and the revitalisation of Indian society. The 'alternatives' emphasised commitments, and reciprocal links between school and the society. Rabindranath Tagore pointed out several limitations of school set up by colonial authorities, in his writings Shikhar Her Fer (1893) and Shikhar Bahan (1915). As a child, Tagore had refused to attend School; he later wrote, 'What tortured me in my school days was the fact that the school has not the completeness of the world. It was a special arrangement for giving lessons...But children are in love with life, and it is their first love. All its colour and movement attract their eager attention. And are quite sure of our wisdom in stifling this love? We rob the child of his earth to teach him geography, of language to teach him grammar...Child-Nature protest against such calamity with all its power of suffering, subdued at last into silence by punishment.' (Tagore, in Chakravarty1961, pg 218; in Prasad2005, pg81). Tagore set up his own alternative to the prevailing educational system:

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Vishwa Bharati in Shantiniketan, Bengal. Classes here, were- and still are held in the lap of nature. Vishwa Bharati becomes a centre for excellence in art and aesthetics, creative activities and awareness of local as well as world cultures.

Gandhi's view resembles Tagore's in the emphasis on contextually relevant education, mother tongue as the medium of instruction, and opposition to examination-oriented bookish reaching. He translated his vision into practice through a series of school, starting in Phoenix Farm and Tolstoy Farm in South Africa and continuing into schools set up in Champaran, Sabarmati, Wardha and many other parts of India. Gandhi developed Nai Taleem or Basic Education in which students devoting few hours daily to academic pursuits, and the rest of the day to the performance of 'Bread Labour' that includes craft work, agriculture, cooking, cleaning and related tasks. His approach to education aimed at strengthening village life and communities. As early as 1917, When Gandhi began five small schools for peasants 'children in Champaran, then he said, " The idea is to get hold of as many children as possible and give them an all round education, a good knowledge of hindi or urdu and through that medium, knowledge of arithmetic, rudiments of history and geography, simple scientific principles and some industrial training. No cut and dried syllabus has yet been prepared because according to him I am going on a unbeaten track. I look upon you present system with horror and distrust. Instead of developing the moral and mental faculties of the little children it dwarfs them. Stage crafts, arts, sports and celebration of festivals from all religion were important parts of Nai taleem. In Nai Taleem there were no textbooks as such, but students were constantly

encouraged to use library and can get the knowledge of diverse field. In the library education is not only the motive but exposure to different field or subjects are also required.

Educationist Gijubhai Badheka emphasised on children's need for an atmosphere nurturing independence and self-reliance. He gave this idea an institutional basis by establishing Bal Mandir in Gujarat in 1920, and in his writings, he identified the different facets of idea. Gijubhai's Divaswapna (1990) is the fictitious story of a teacher who rejects the orthodox culture of education. This classic piece of writing by him yields rich insights into effective teaching, as it describes experiments in education undertaken by an inspires teacher in a ordinary village school. Gijubhai explains and clearly showed that how to teach history, geography, language and other subjects through stories and rhymes, in a way that appealed to children. He believed in arousing the child's curiosity in a thousand and one things ranging from insects to stars, rather than routine textbook teaching. Gijubhau wrote a number of books and booklets for parents, teachers, general readers and captivating stories and verses for children.

J. Krishnamurti too thought of education in connection with the whole of life. It is not something isolated, leading to alienation. He looks closely at the process of learning in relation to human life. In the biography of Krishnamurti, pupul jayakar quotes him speaking of that period in his life some 75 years later." The boy had always said, ' I will do whatever you want'. There was an element of subservience, obedience. The boy was vague, uncertain, and unclear; he didn't seem to care what was happening. He was like a vessel, with a large hole in it, whatever was put in, went through, <https://assignbuster.com/origins-of-alternative-education-in-india-education-essay/>

nothing remained." (J. Krishnamurti: a biography. Arkana, 1996). He noted that the teachers have a responsibility to ensure that '...when child leaves the school, he is well established in goodness both outwardly and inwardly'. Krishnamurti set up two schools in the 1930s, Rajghat Besant School in Varanasi, UP and the Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh, over the decades, the KFI (Krishnamurti Foundation of India) has kept alive its commitment to meaningful education, expanding its network of schools to Chennai, Uttarkashi, Bangalore and Pune. Like Gijubhai's and Gandhi's schools, KFI has shown that alternative education can be made accessible to those from underprivileged backgrounds as well. Learning goals are individualised for each child, and teaching aids are carefully designed using cards, books, puppets, stories and local material. A visit to any of this school of Krishnamurti bring to his thought: 'Education is not just to pass examination, take a degree and a job, get married and settle down, but also to be able to listen to the birds, to see the sky, to see the extraordinary beauty of a tree, and the shape of hills, and to feel with them, to be really, directly in touch with them.'

Mainstreaming Alternatives

Innovation of Alternatives Schools can spread to mainstream Education?

Though it might seem fragmented and confusing, the landscape of alternative schooling is certainly fertile! From the range of schools discussed earlier, it is clear that there are people scattered across the different parts of the country, dreaming of a different kind of education, and many who are actually living out their dreams. Most of the experiments are small but

fundamentally replicable. They reached out their target population in a meaningful ways to diverse children, from the different economic backgrounds and from diverse social settings. Several Experiments are clustered in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra with the sprinkling in other places including Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bengal, Gujarat, Delhi, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and others.

It is instructive to remember that sometimes, there is no hard and fast line dividing the mainstream from the alternative. Even hardcore 'mainstream' schools gradually adopt some elements of 'alternative' learning in their pedagogy to teach the children. Lots of primary and nursery schools across the country have for instance have adopted the some elements of Montessori and play way methods, through which children enjoy the learning and grab the technique more quickly and efficiently. Widespread questioning has propelled even the government to usher in some improvements. Thus, non formal education campaigns links education to social awareness. The Bihar Education Project (in partnership with UNICEF) has opened Charwaha Vidyalayas (for children grazing animals) and Angana paathshalas (courtyard schools for girls in remote areas). The Central government's ' Education Guarantee Scheme, and Alternative and Innovative Education Scheme' employ flexible strategies for out of school children, including bridge courses, back to school camps and residential camps for accelerated learning. In some of these, learning outcomes have proved to be of quite a high standard (Education for All 2005). Premier teacher training institutions such as the District Institutes for education and training (DIET) have

incorporated a few creative, child centred pedagogies. The NCERT has devised a new, state of art curricular framework for school education.

Yes all this is still a far cry from the realisation from the full blown alternatives. It is really sad to know that mainstream education still dominates the lives of the vast majority of Indian children. It mainly depends upon its philosophical foundation which rest on large scale, centralised, examination oriented teaching, with flexible daily schedules and rigid syllabi. In India there are many such examples which can be illustrated to a number of groups who were engaged in putting in their best efforts to bring about significant change in the field of education. They believe in their own work it does not matter to them that their effort was not in the large scale or that it was not visible to all people in the country. They think that if they or their work even influence the few young minds, they set us thinking about the enormous possibilities that would open up if the if local or national government support this changes. The government policy to set up a National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) was found to be the most popular and significant step toward improvement in the field of education. Such a step opens the door to informal and individualised pace of learning, which was welcomed by most of the alternative schools. Indeed it was the first time when alternative learning was coming on their path of main stream professional education. With this government initiative to open NIOS has made possible the following:

The opening of school for slow learners

Inclusive education for the differently able along with 'normal' children.

Delinking of the methodology of a learning programme from the stringent requirements of the Board Examination.

Addressing the different pace of learning.

Giving a point of entry to the mainstream from an alternative paradigm.

In Pedagogy of Hope, Freire writes, 'I do not understand human existence, and the struggle needed to improve it, apart from hope and dream'(Freire 1996). Keeping the hope alive is not easy. To even identify and explore existing 'alternatives'-however they may be possibility of being imperfect and incomplete but still it is an exercise in hope. So today it is very necessary need to reach and stay close to mainsprings of alternative educational thinking-which nestles within the visions of wider transformative socio-political changes. These alternatives will continue to develop, expand and widen. We are required to shed the notion that 'There is No Alternative' and instead, work toward bringing and actively increasingly cohesive, meaningful alternatives to the society.

Why such Education is needed?

According to Martha C. Nussbaum, she explains in one of her article that Public education is crucial ingredients for the health of democracy. Recently there are many initiatives has been taken around the world in the field of education, however they are mainly narrow down their focus on science and technology, neglecting the important subject such as arts and humanities.

They also focus on the internalization of information, rather than on the formation of the student's critical and imaginative capacities. The author

demonstrated the live example which she has experienced in Bihar with the <https://assignbuster.com/origins-of-alternative-education-in-india-education-essay/>

one of the Patna centred Non government organisation named Adithi. When they reached a place near to Nepalese border, they found very meagre facilities. Teaching is done mostly outside the classroom on the ground, or under the shade of barn. Students were suffering from basic facilities such as paper and only few slates were available that has to be passed hand to hand. However it was creative education.

Next she visited the girl literacy program, house in a shed next door. The daily schedule of girls were little busy as in the morning they went for herding of the goat, So there classes began around 4p. m. about 15 girls in total comes to this single classrooms age 6-15 years for three hours of after work learning. There are no desks, no chairs, no blackboard are available, and there is only few slates and bit of chawks but these problem does not stop girls from coming to the class and the passion of the teacher is also one of the major factor of this binding. The teacher is themselves among the poor rural women assisted by the Adithi program. . Proudly the girls brought in the goats that they had been able to buy from the savings account they have jointly established in their group. Mathematics is taught in part by focusing on such practical issues. Author thinks that there are many things to learn from given examples but few of them can be: first, the close linkage between education and critical thinking about one's social environment; second, the emphasis on the arts as central aspects of the educational experience; third, the intense passion and investment of the teachers, their delight in the progress and also the individuality of their students.

Now the author elaborates model of education for democratic citizenship.

According to her there are three types of capacities are essential to the <https://assignbuster.com/origins-of-alternative-education-in-india-education-essay/>

cultivation of democratic citizenship in the today's world (Nussbaum, 1997). The First is a Capacity stressed by both Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru. They emphasise on the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions, for living what we may follow Socrates; we may call 'the examined life'. This capacity can only be obtain if we train one' self, Training this capacity requires developing the capacity to reason logically, to test what one what he or she reads or says for consistency of reasoning, correctness of fact, and accuracy of judgment. Testing of this sort frequently creates new challenges to tradition, as Socrates knew well when he defended himself against the charge of 'corrupting the young' But he defended his activity on the grounds that democracy needs citizens. Critical thinking is particularly crucial for good citizenship in a society that needs and required to come to grips with the presence of people who differ by ethnicity, caste, and religion. Then after she describes the second part of the her proposal Citizens who cultivate their capacity for effective democratic citizenship need, further, an ability to see themselves as not simply citizens of some local region or group, but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern. It is very essential that they have to understand both the differences that make understanding difficult between groups and nations and the shared human needs and interests that make understanding essential, if common problems are to be solved. This means learning quite a lot both about nations other than one's own and about the different groups that are part of one's own nation. This task includes showing students how and why different groups interpret evidence differently and construct different narratives. Even the best textbook will not succeed at this complex task unless it is presented together with a pedagogy

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that fosters critical thinking, the critical scrutiny of conflicting source materials, and active learning (learning by doing) about the difficulties of constructing a historical narrative. This brings me to the third part of my proposal. As the story of the dowry play in Bihar indicates, citizens cannot think well on the basis of factual knowledge alone. The third ability of the citizen, closely related to the first two, can be called the narrative imagination. This means the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have. As Tagore wrote, "we may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy ... But we find that this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed" (Tagore, 1961, p. 219).

Finally, the arts are great sources of joy - and this joy carries over into the rest of a child's education. Amita Sen's book about Tagore as choreographer, aptly entitled *Joy in All Work*, shows how all the 'regular' education in Santiniketan, which enabled these students to perform very well in standard examinations, was infused with delight because of the way in which it was combined with dance and song. Children do not like to sit still all day; but they also do not know automatically how to express emotion with their bodies in dance. Tagore's expressive, but also disciplined, dance regime was an essential source of creativity, thought, and freedom for all pupils, but particularly for women, whose bodies had been taught to be shame-ridden and inexpressive (Amita Sen, 1999).

Story of a Bird

A very beautiful story has been demonstrated by the author about the education that if there is no proper guidance is given to teacher towards the children, then it led to the severe damage to child's mind. According to her there is no more wonderful depiction of what is wrong with an education based on mere technical mastery and rote learning than Tagore's sad story 'The Parrot's Training'.

A certain Raja had a bird that he loved. He wanted to educate it, because he thought ignorance was a bad thing. His pundits convinced him that the bird must go to school. The first thing that had to be done was to give the bird a suitable edifice for his schooling: so they build a magnificent golden cage. The next thing was to get good textbooks. The pundits said, "Textbooks can never be too many for our purpose." Scribes worked day and night to produce the requisite manuscripts. Then, teachers were employed. Somehow or other they got quite a lot of money for themselves and built themselves good houses. When the Raja visited the school, the teachers showed him the methods used to instruct the parrot. "The method was so stupendous that the bird looked ridiculously unimportant in comparison. The Raja was satisfied that there was no flaw in the arrangements. As for any complaint from the bird itself, that simply could not be expected. Its throat was so completely choked with the leaves from the books that it could neither whistle nor whisper." The lessons continued. One day, the bird died. Nobody had the least idea how long ago this had happened. The Raja's nephews, who had been in charge of the education ministry, reported to the Raja: "Sire, the bird's education has been completed." "Does it hop?" he Raja

enquired. "Never!" said the nephews. "Does it fly?" "No." "Bring me the bird," said the Raja. The bird was brought to him, guarded by the kotwal and the sepoy and the sowars. The Raja poked its body with his finger. Only its inner stuffing of book-leaves rustled. Outside the window, the murmur of the spring breeze amongst the newly budded Asoka leaves made the April morning wistful. (Tagore, 1994) This wonderful story hardly needs commentary. Its crucial point is that educationists tend to enjoy talking about themselves and their own activity, and to focus too little on the small tender children whose eagerness and curiosity should be the core of the educational endeavour. Tagore thought that children were usually more alive than adults, because they were less weighted down by habit. The task of education was to avoid killing off that curiosity, and then to build outward from it, in a spirit of respect for the child's freedom and individuality rather than one of hierarchical imposition of information. I do not agree with absolutely everything in Tagore's educational ideal. For example, I am less anti-memorization than Tagore was. Memorization of fact can play a valuable and even a necessary role in giving pupils command over their own relationship to history and political argument. That is one reason why good textbooks are important, something that Tagore would have disputed. But about the large point I am utterly in agreement: education must begin with the mind of the child, and it must have the goal of increasing that mind's freedom in its social environment, rather than killing it off.