
REDISCOVERING ANCIENT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES FOR LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The teaching and learning process has evolved significantly over generations, adapting to changes in teaching-learning methods, changes in curricula, technology, society, and educational theories. Ancient education focused both on physical development and learning. There were only a few students who could get an opportunity to study in Gurukuls. The ancient times were the ones who blessed our motherland with great warriors and saints. On the other hand, the latest generation- Generation Z (people born from 1996 to 2010, The Australian Bureau of Statistics) has isolated them in their computer rooms. The lack of patience is lost these days among these students who cannot even read books to get knowledge they just need a cooked answer to every question on ChatGPT which is the crux of all the material related to it. Whereas, in ancient times, the searchers of knowledge used to isolate themselves in the quest for knowledge. The study's objective is to rediscover the ancient educational practices in the modern education system. The findings of the study state that the traditional methods of storytelling, sharing life experiences and experiential learning should be introduced in the modern system of education.

Keywords: education, learning, ancient education, ancient educational practices

Introduction

The teaching and learning process has evolved significantly over generations, adapting to changes in teaching-learning methods, changes in curricula, technology, society, and educational theories. The application of different techniques is believed to give different learning outcomes. The mindset of students of different generations has always been different from the other generations, which was according to the call of the time and the trend. For example, ancient education focuses both on physical development and learning. It was the time when the kings used to have wars to conquer each other's kingdom and every person needed to learn the rules and regulations to

be a warrior. However, only a few students could get an opportunity to study in Gurukuls. It was because of the smaller number of Gurukuls and Gurus.

The ancient times were the ones who blessed our motherland with great warriors and saints. On the other hand, the latest generation- Generation Z (people born from 1996 to 2010, The Australian Bureau of Statistics) has isolated them in their computer rooms. Modern students lack physical development and are mostly found exhausted and frustrated. The lack of patience is lost these days among the students who cannot even read books to get knowledge, they just need a cooked answer to every question on ChatGPT which is the crux of all the material related to it on the internet. Whereas, in ancient times, the searchers of knowledge used to isolate themselves in forests for the quest for knowledge.

The 'Gurukul' system of ancient India, which emphasised comprehensive development beyond academics centuries before the subject became a trendy phrase in contemporary education, offers much to learn. This encompassed education that promoted growth on all levels—mental, cognitive, physical, and spiritual (India Today, 2022).

Numerous international papers, such as the report "Learning: The Treasure Within" from the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century that was submitted to UNESCO, highlight the goal of education to lead to the "full development of the human personality." But does our education system provide us the real holistic development?

The main goal of the education system is to prepare a student for competitive exams and jobs despite preparing them to deal with life. Hence there are various practices which need to be rediscovered for updating our education system for the betterment of the individuals, society and the country.

The Rationale of the Study

History has always taught us lessons and prepared us for the future. It is been found that visitors to India have come from all over the world, with varying climates and civilizations, back in ancient times. India was a magical place to them! Indian culture, riches, philosophies, religions, art, architecture, and educational methods were well-known around the world. The knowledge, customs, and practices that shaped and uplifted mankind were thought to have originated from the old educational system. Why are people moving out of the country to study? The tables have turned and the times have gone when foreigners used to come to India to study at universities like Nalanda and Takshila. Are there discrepancies in our education systems or there is a need to reimplement the old educational practices? Understanding and drawing from the educational wisdom of the past can inspire positive changes in contemporary education, promoting a more holistic, culturally sensitive, and effective learning experience.

Statement of the Problem

REDISCOVERING ANCIENT EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES FOR LEARNING

Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature and the research design is of the Descriptive type. A systematic review's goal is to provide answers to certain issues through the use of a clear, methodical, and repeatable search technique. The information is categorised and taken out of the included research to synthesise the results and shed light on any gaps or discrepancies as well as how to apply the findings in real-world settings.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is

1. To explore the educational practices which can be reintegrated into our modern educational system.
2. To identify the practices of ancient education which will boost the holistic learning of a student.
3. To analyse the discrepancies in the modern education system which hinder the learning of a student.

Results and Discussion

The discussion of the various ancient educational practices which need to be reintroduced in our education system are described below.

Ancient education

The gurus and their shishyas coexisted at that time, supporting one another in daily life. Realising one's inner potential, living a disciplined life, and obtaining a comprehensive education were the key goals. Before achieving their objectives, students lived together away from home for years. Additionally, the guru and shishya's bond became stronger over time at the gurukul. The focus was placed on developing the inner aspects of the personality as well as the external aspects of the many fields they were studying, such as history, the art of debate, law, medicine, etc. (Ncert, 2019). Depending on their caste, the pupils were accepted to the Gurukul at a particular point. Students who were 6, 8, and 11 years old, respectively, were accepted to the Gurukul by Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas. The Bharadwaja Muni's ashram at Prayag was another well-known ashram during that era. Rishi Vashistha's ashram served as the school for Lord Rama as well. This identical Gurukul method was followed even by Lord Krishna. It was Rishi Sandipani who taught him. The renowned tales of Krishna, Balaram, and Sudama took place at the same Sandipani Gurukul (Tandon, 2021).

Equality

In ancient times, the children of kings, and other people of their kingdom who could send their children for education used to study at the same place i.e. Ashrams as shown in the famous Ramayana serial by Ramanand Sagar. There was never a barrier of rich or poor in a Gurukul which was a plus point the Indian education system had even back then. The doors were always open to various deserving students (Tandon, 2021). But these days the

children of rich people study in private schools which are fully air-conditioned and have other fancy facilities. However, the children of economically weaker people used to study in schools where they did not have access to drinking water. There is a division among the students into two parts- Private and Government schools. The practice of having a common educational institute just like the ancient times should be a priority to boost the learning of a student.

Curriculum

Diverse fields provided learning materials, including history (Itihas), logic (Anviksiki), interpretation (Mimamsa), architecture (Shilpashastra), politics (Arthashastra), agriculture, trade, commerce, and animal husbandry (Varta), and architecture (Dhanurvedya). In addition to sports and leisure activities, physical education was a significant component of the curriculum. Students engaged in yoga sadhana (mind-body training), dhanurvedya (martial arts training), exercises, and games. Together, the Gurus and their students diligently studied to master all areas of knowledge (Ncert, 2019). But modern education only focuses on the subjects like computers and sciences. The ancient times subjects were used to make students aware of every field and make them responsible people. The idea of ancient times will help a student develop physically, mentally and emotionally, as well as help to produce responsible citizens for personal growth and learning.

Skill and Life Lessons

Typically, vocational knowledge in subjects like engineering, architecture, and sculpting was taught outside of the official educational system (*Education | Definition, Development, History, Types, & Facts*, 2023). The goal of the ancient Indian Gurukuls was to teach students practical skills that they could use to solve issues in their daily lives. Students pick up knowledge through practical approaches and observation (India Today, 2022). The current learning system on the other hand is majorly dependent on rote learning. The kids of junior classes are taught the names of the birds and animals which they have never seen in real. The modern education system is more based on the pictures and videos of the smart classes. There are several crime cases in schools these days, these could be stopped if the students are prepared for such situations. The introduction of subjects like self-defence could be helpful in such scenarios.

Moral values

Strong moral and ethical conduct was stressed, along with the instillation of qualities like independence, empathy, inventiveness, integrity, loyalty, and compassion. Early adoption of values has been scientifically demonstrated to increase a child's self-assurance, competence, and intelligence (India Today, 2022). In ancient times, the guru was

considered to be the supreme. Students were taught to respect them deeply. There was no point in disobeying the teachers or letting them down in any way. These days students lack the feeling of empathy, loyalty, brotherhood etc. The students find it cool to disrespect others, bully others, tell lies, teasing just for fun. These all common practices among the students need to be opposed by the introduction of the subjects or sessions related to the moral values of the students.

Grading system

Grading theme knowledge was not the only way that education was evaluated in the past. The abilities that students acquired and their ability to apply practical information to real-world scenarios were evaluated. Similar techniques of evaluation must be developed by the contemporary educational system to evaluate students on skill acquisition and practical application in addition to the present methods (India Today, 2022). The current system of grading has made the students so marks or grades-oriented that they hardly care about the learning outcomes of their ways of learning. Grades are the only evaluation criteria that the modern system is reliant on. This ignores the cognitive development of a child. The rat race of scoring good marks should be replaced with the traditional methods of grading.

Religious knowledge

"No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds," states Article 28(1) of the Indian Constitution. Therefore, religious instruction is prohibited in schools; instead, Madhya Pradesh B.A. students can choose to take a course called "Philosophy of Ramcharitmanas." Lessons on the "ideals of the Ram Rajya" and the "miraculous engineering of the Ram Setu" are also to be taught alongside it (Gatade & Gatade, 2021).

The philosophies of the ancient Indians and the buildings with the architecture are still heading high in the sky. Why are the overbridges made by the new engineers collapse after a few days of inauguration? We need to learn from the old-time architectural and philosophical practices to improve ourselves in all aspects. The Ramcharitmanas, penned by poet-saint Tulsidas in the 16th century, are introduced as a "philosophical text," but this is just further proof of how the New Education Policy facilitates the entrance of religion in the classroom under the guise of "Indian Knowledge Tradition" (Gatade & Gatade, 2021). More initiatives could be taken by the administrators for the holistic development of the students.

Priceless education

Gurudakshina, as a thank you after completing their study, students used to give their guru a voluntary gift or donation known as a "Gurudakshina" in exchange in the old times. This might take the shape of cash, priceless goods, or any kind of service the guru wanted (Kumar, 2023). This act of gratitude towards their teachers helped

them learn to be grateful. Teachers had no financial or economic interest attached to teaching the students. It was entirely a selfless act of kindness. But in the modern era, education has become a business for the greedy ones. When student interests or the requirements of a quality education collide with those of the profit-driven educated elite, educational institutes sometimes choose to overlook them. In many ways, an institute's purported independence has just served as a cover to keep these activities hidden from the general public (Deshpande, 2000). Such practices should be banned by the governments and awareness should be spread amongst people that education can neither be sold nor bought.

Personalised learning

Personalized learning is an educational approach that aims to customize learning for each student's strengths, needs, skills, and interests. The "Gurukul" method was a student-centric approach that emphasized each student's unique learning requirements and skills. Arjuna's gurus individually trained him to be a proficient archer. Another student would have done better if they had developed a different skill. Because of their progressive, non-linear approach, the gurus were able to adapt their teaching approaches to the various skill levels of their students. It is important to let students participate at their own speed without pressuring them to follow a set curriculum at all times. Students learn more effectively and adapt more readily in a customised learning environment, where their innate potential is developed (Eduabroad, n.d.). Our schools should focus on personalised learning to boost the learning in creative minds.

Experiential Learning

The ancient educational system used to focus on experiential learning. Experiential Learning is the process of learning by doing. By engaging students in hands-on experiences and reflection, they are better able to connect theories and knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world situations (*What Is Experiential Learning and Why Is It Important?*, n.d.). The emphasis of the traditional Indian educational system was on hands-on and experiential learning. Pupils gained knowledge from observation, ritual participation, field trips, and practical experiences. The goal of this strategy was to close the gap between theoretical understanding and its real-world implementation (Kumar, 2023). The integration of experiential learning could be a blessing for the students of the modern era.

Isolation

In the solitude of self-isolation, there lies an opportunity for rediscovery. Choosing to isolate oneself can be a deliberate act to reconnect with ancient educational practices for personal learning. This intentional withdrawal from the noise of the modern world allows introspection, creating a space to explore age-old wisdom in solitude. In the cocoon of isolation, the seeker becomes both student and teacher, navigating the timeless corridors of wisdom to forge a deeper connection with the past and illuminate the path toward personal enlightenment. When

learning about complicated life concerns from their instructor in tranquil natural surroundings, pupils in ancient India would withdraw from the outside world and practise meditation and careful listening. Their education encompassed not just academic content but also a real-world perspective on the world and society acquired from firsthand engagement with individuals. An attempt was made to provide students with the opportunity to encounter the ultimate truth firsthand and mould society accordingly (Panda, 2023). Hence we learn from ancient times that to gain true knowledge or to achieve your goals, one can isolate oneself to avoid distractions. It will even help the students enjoy mental peace and satisfaction.

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that the exploration of ancient educational practices unveils a treasure trove of principles that resonate with timeless wisdom. The Gurukul system, characterized by the symbiotic relationship between gurus and shishyas, fostered an environment where self-realization, disciplined living, and comprehensive education were paramount. Students, irrespective of their backgrounds, lived together for years, forging strong bonds and focusing on holistic development. The curriculum of ancient times was a mosaic of diverse fields, encompassing history, logic, architecture, politics, and more. Importantly, practical skills and life lessons were imparted through vocational knowledge, martial arts training, and physical education. The emphasis on moral values, instilled through deep respect for gurus, contributed to the holistic development of individuals. In contrast, the modern education system often falls short of cultivating a well-rounded individual. The grading system, largely focused on academic achievements, neglects practical application and skill development. Furthermore, the ancient Gurukuls were characterized by a lack of economic bias, providing education to all, and fostering equality that the contemporary educational system struggles to replicate. Ancient education integrated religious knowledge seamlessly, teaching philosophy and ideals, and contributing to the architectural marvels that stand testament to India's rich heritage. The practice of Gurudakshina, a voluntary gift given by students after completing their studies, emphasized gratitude and selflessness, a stark contrast to the commercialization of education in the modern era. The study underscores the need to reintegrate elements of ancient educational practices, promoting personalized learning, experiential learning, and values-based education. Embracing isolation for focused self-discovery echoes the ancient approach, allowing learners to immerse themselves in profound insights away from modern distractions. In essence, the rediscovery of ancient educational practices advocates for a paradigm shift in modern education, urging stakeholders to reassess priorities. By merging the wisdom of the past with contemporary needs, a more holistic, inclusive, and effective education system can be crafted, fostering not just academic excellence but also nurturing individuals capable of contributing meaningfully to society.

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