

SPIRITUALITY AS A PART OF TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM: NURTURING HOLISTIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century world, so far has been full of new challenges which is expected to be continued. These modern day challenges have disrupted the personal as well as social sphere of man. To counter this, new solutions are being proposed regularly. The solutions are multifaceted requiring multiple skill set. In such a scenario, spirituality is the savior as it calls for a balanced approach. Spirituality helps a person to grow sustainably and excel in personal and social life. This research paper attempts to understand the role of spirituality in imparting holistic education and inclusion of spiritual values in educational system by National Education Policy 2020. The research questions have been answered by reading relevant sources along with using appropriate techniques like brainstorming and mind mapping. The research paper has found that ethics and morality, mindfulness, purpose and interconnectedness should be the key components of teacher education curriculum. The paper has also suggested target areas and approaches to include spirituality in curriculum. Also, the provisions of National Education Policy 2020 have been interpreted to show the inclusion of spiritual values in educational system.

Keywords: Spirituality, Curriculum, Teacher Education, Holistic Education, National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Introduction

In the 21st century world, technology has advanced to the level where communication across the world is a matter of few seconds. One has the comfort of getting food delivered at home in few minutes by making few clicks in the smartphone. Scrolling through social media is the new norm of consuming information. Technology and innovation have made our life comfortable but the relations and connections within people have weakened. The harmony within self is disturbed resulting in depression and anxiety. The solution lies in spirituality which helps in creating a balance in life. In the modern era where new challenges and problems have become a part and parcel of daily life, man is supposed to acquire multiple skill set as a solution to tackle such obstacles to excel in life. It is not a one-day training or a workshop to become a person who thinks critically, communicate effectively and manages collaboratively. Such traits are the building blocks of a personality required in the modern-day world. The spirituality in education offers framework to prepare a class of people who are driven by purposes in life and know to act accordingly. Spirituality in education means to focus on the students by nurturing their inner self and harness the potential in the right way. Spirituality focuses on self awareness, critical thinking, decision making, social behavior, values and others. By inculcating spirituality in the core curriculum at various levels of education, the students will get transform into valuable assets for the society and nation. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 has emphasized upon holistic development of students by proposing multidisciplinary perspective in education, preservation of values and morals, to promote critical thinking and a sound educational system. To further these goals, spirituality has an important role to play as it helps in establishing a strong connection between mind and body which is crucial for the development of learners and teachers as well. Spirituality in education can be useful for student development in terms of social and emotional learning, moral and ethical integrity and a sound learning environment which is driven by purposeful learning. Spiritual education should not be limited to the teachings of religious values rather the scope is quite wide. To include spirituality in education means to impart valuebased education which focuses on mindfulness, experiential learning, reflective practices, community engagement, life skills and others.

Spirituality in education is a way to encompass holistic education which is the need of the hour. Holistic education is not just a teaching approach but a paradigm having a set of assumptions and principles to be used in educational processes (Miller, 1992). If we look at the traditional form of education, it is static and offers little to no scope of interconnectedness with the real world which results in alienation of students (Neves, 2009). The assumptions of holistic education include educating the whole child, to see the child as a part of whole and to teach the child as a

whole (Forbes, 2003). The focus of present educational approach is on standards and testing measures. Holistic education sees this as a consumerist approach which prepares the students for the consumerist world focussing on materialism. This approach has reduced the schooling to some training for workplace where performance is measured by standardized tests (Miller, 2004). It is mechanistic approach to education not resulting in whole development of personality. To deal with the challenges and complexities of 21st century, UNESCO has proposed four pillars of learning which basically constitutes the idea of holistic education. These are: (i) learning to know, (ii) learning to do, (iii) learning to live together, and (iv) learning to be. Learning to know focuses on developing cognitive abilities and instills critical thinking, problem solving and knowledge acquisition, thereby leading to lifelong learning. Learning to do focuses on the relevant skills required to attain in this ever-changing world. The skills focused upon are employment oriented and technical which increase competency, adaptability and creativity. Learning to live together focuses on social skills which are required the most to ensure harmony and cohesion in the society. It emphasize on promoting diversity and showing empathy to others. Learning to be focuses on the self which calls for personal development in terms of awareness, morality and values.

In this paper, we have focused on how inculcating spiritual values in teacher education will help in achieving the notion of holistic education. We have also discussed how NEP 2020 has included spiritual values to make enriching educational system.

Research Questions

- How does the inculcation of spiritual values in teacher education curriculum lead to holistic education?
- How does NEP 2020 has included spiritual values in educational system?

To above research questions are answered by studying relevant research papers, books, reports and official documents which provide an understanding of the concepts. Along with this, brainstorming and mind mapping techniques are used to understand and interpret the relations, patterns and connections between spirituality and holistic education.

Spiritual values in Core Curriculum and Holistic Education

Spirituality is not a phenomenon of recent importance rather it is deeply rooted into our culture and ancient educational systems specifically in gurukul system. A spiritually sound person is able to take informed decisions, behave mannerly in family and society, accomplish tasks successfully and maintain integrity in thought, action and speech. To create such people in society, education is the best medium. Therefore, emphasis on including spiritual values in core curriculum should be laid. Including spirituality in education helps to make education holistic and engaging. Holistic education focuses not just on academics but the whole personality. The traditional education focuses more on academic achievement with a bit on physical education. Including spirituality in the curriculum focus on all the essential aspects to develop a personality suited well enough to tackle the modern day challenges. The core elements include mindfulness, ethics and morality, purpose and interconnectedness. Kuyken et al. (2013) conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of mindfulness in improving mental health and well being. With a sample size of 522 secondary school students, experimental research was conducted. The findings revealed that children who participated in the intervention program showed less depressive symptoms than others. Ethics in education is another important aspect where focus is on teaching values like honesty, kindness, empathy, character building and others (Gülcan, 2015). Having purpose in life is important to realize one's potential, getting motivation and lead an enriching life (Moran, 2018). Interconnectedness is a major element to focus upon in order to lead a sound social life as interconnectedness leads to increased opportunities, social cohesion and collaboration (Riaz & Shaukat, 2024).

The curriculum with key components, target areas, approaches and techniques to achieve success in the areas is presented as below:

Key Component	Target Areas	Approaches and Techniques
Ethics and Morality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity • Honesty • Empathy • Fairness • Character development • Respect for diversity • Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical teachings • Moral philosophy • Role modeling
Mindfulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal well-being • Emotional development • Focus • Clarity in thoughts • Compassion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditation • Journaling • Cognitive therapy • Focus therapy • Social-Emotional learning
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness • Self actualization • Aspirations and ambitions • Goal setting • Self-constructed perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflection • Self-introspection • Journaling • Moral education • Social exposure
Interconnectedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of global citizenship • Social responsibility • Environmental responsibility • Personal interconnectedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project based learning • Collaborative learning • Experiential learning • Community engagement • Self-reflection

The above-mentioned key components, their target areas, approaches and techniques should be included in the curriculum of teacher education to impart holistic education. Spirituality in education leads to the development of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, social skills and ethical values. Such a curriculum will strive to make prospective teachers competent enough to excel in their professional and personal sphere, to create a balance between work and personal sphere and to prioritize things to get maximum output. Only the Spiritually sound teachers will be able to transform spirituality to students effectively. Thus, we can say that including spiritual values in curriculum of teacher education will lead to holistic education.

NEP 2020 and Inclusion of Spiritual values

To address the changing needs of society, National Education Policy 2020 is an attempt by the Government of India which proposes multiple reforms to align the educational system as per the needs of 21st century. NEP 2020 is a blueprint to make our country “Vishwaguru” by creating hubs of knowledge. There are multiple provisions aiming to transform traditional education system to modern education system having the best of curriculum practices taken even from Indian Knowledge System (IKS). Spirituality, although is not mentioned explicitly in the policy but the provisions are somehow inculcating spiritual values.

An essential provision of NEP 2020 is holistic education. The policy aims to develop all the essential skills like cognitive, affective, social and ethical along with academic skills. The policy calls to focus on developing whole personality of students by integrating sports, arts, vocational skills and others. Another important provision is emphasis to Indian Knowledge System which is a repository of ancient knowledge and wisdom covering all the fields from philosophy to science. IKS also emphasizes on experiential learning, ethics, morals, inner well being and harmony with nature. One common point which is given importance in almost all the provisions of NEP is values and care. Multilingualism caters to the people coming from diverse regions thereby inculcating a sense of unity in diversity. Another important provision is multidisciplinary approach which means to get input from different disciplines in the form of knowledge, perspective and methods. Multidisciplinary approach of education is greatly emphasized to tackle the modern day issues from climate change to policy making. Vocational education is included and community engagement is enhanced as it tries to introduce students with the local art and craft. This

also helps to preserve local values, traditions and customs. Another important element is universal human values like empathy, kindness, honesty and others. These are very important as people are facing difficulties to manage in the society due to increasing individual tendencies. Assessment reforms are proposed in the policy which seeks to move away from achievement based evaluation to learning based evaluation. Formative evaluation is emphasized much to check for student learning periodically and make flexible followups thereby making student focused evaluation. The policy has also proposed integrated teacher education program for teacher training which will include spirituality.

From the above discussion, we got to know the importance of spirituality in education and its inculcation in NEP 2020. Spirituality in education offers multiple solutions to the modern day hustle where people are confronted with anxiety, depression, relationship issues, work-life balance, personality disorders and others.

Conclusion

Inculcation of spiritual values in educational practices is important to develop whole personality as the learning experiences will be holistic which not only favors intellectual development but emotional, social and ethical as well. Spiritual values help to transform knowledge into wisdom resulting in being a better version of self. It fosters self-awareness, critical thinking, empathy, kindness and sense of purpose among students. The education system enriched with spiritual values promote diversity, inclusivity, interconnectedness, mindfulness and ethics. Therefore, spirituality should be included in the teacher education curriculum as an element which is not limited to religious beliefs but something which creates an optimal learning environment where learners coming from diverse backgrounds feel valued and learn by exploring themselves. This will result in creating a class of teachers having spiritual values thereby leading to transfer of values to students.

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