

Reimagining TVET: Vision of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi towards a Self-Reliant India with Special Reference to NEP 2020

*¹Dr. Suprabha Dey

*¹ Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Education, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, India.

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Abstract

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 focuses on Quality Education that aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. SDG 4 has 7 targets of which target 4.2 aims to ensure equal access to affordable, technical, vocational and higher education and the target 4.3 aims to increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success. Both Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi envisioned the integration and inclusion of vocational education in the system of education for the emergence of an empowered and developed nation. The National Education Policy 2020 also very much emphasizes for the re-imagination of vocational education for the emergence of a self-reliant India. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to highlight the educational philosophies of Tagore and Gandhi towards vocational education and to explore NEP 2020 in the light of re-imagining Technical and Vocational Education and Training or TVET for meeting the contemporary educational needs of the learners, thereby aiming for a revolutionary change directed in the progress of the nation with special reference of NEP-2020.

*Corresponding Author

Dr. Suprabha Dey

Assistant Professor, Amity Institute of Education, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, India.

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Introduction

TVET or the Technical and Vocational Education and Training refer to the continuous learning, training and professional development of a wide range of skills. Skills can be formally defined as the relevant know-how, experience, knowledge, education and training that helps an individual to perform a certain task. The rapid increase of globalization and diversification of society has led to the changes in the labor market. This in turn has resulted in the need for competent, knowledgeable and skilled workforce across the world. Indian population with a very young population (Sample Registration System Statistical Report, 2018) makes TVET a pressing need for India. But unfortunately, the working-age population formally trained in TVET, of India's numbers remains just 2.74% (The Periodic Labor Force Survey, 2020). In addition to this the COVID-19 Pandemic has also made us realize that individuals can no longer be dependent on a single aspect for jobs rather should be capable, vocationally competent and skilled enough in multi-dimensional domains to be self-reliant. Therefore, being skilled in the 21st century is no longer a luxury but a necessity. This can only be done if

we can induce vocational capacities and competencies among the learners through education. Thus, it is time to re-think and re-imagine TVET to make the citizens aware, vocationally skilled, competent, independent and empowered.

Objectives

The objectives of the paper are as follows:

1. To explore the vision of Rabindranath Tagore in the light of Vocational Education
2. To explore the vision of Mahatma Gandhi's Naiy Talim addressing Vocational Education
3. To explore the vision of NEP-2020 for the re-imagination of TVET

TVET and the Vision of Rabindranath Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore, the poet, writer, philosopher, social reformer and visionary believed in the education that can contribute for the overall development of an individual. He strongly condemned the education system that only partially leads to the intellectual domain while completely neglecting the holistic development of the human body. Tagore advised

for the systematic engagement of individuals in some fruitful work. His idea of rural reconstruction through his *Sriniketan* experiment is exemplary to portray his vision for the necessity of vocational education. Tagore firmly believed that education will be incomplete without the knowledge and understanding of the patterns of rural living and experiences. Education according to Tagore should be imparted in such a way that the students can inculcate knowledge from the daily life experiences and works that leads to the construction of their own knowledge as well as embed in them the zeal for learning vocational skills. Thus, for the rejuvenation of the rural life the rural reconstruction at *Sriniketan* came into existence. The *Sriniketan* experiment is considered to be one of first attempts for rural development. The ideals of *Sriniketan* aimed at promoting vocational education by teaching and training the villagers with methods, techniques and various procedures for better farming practices and other vocations. This social reform led to promoting literacy among the villagers and the overall rural welfare. The rural re-construction educational programmes in *Sriniketan* undertook new strategies of agriculture and various village crafts and handicrafts were introduced that aimed for the socio-economic development of the rural community. Tagore's *Santiniketan* experiment also aimed to provide education to learners in such a way that it can develop work related competencies among learners and make them skilled from their very childhood. Tagore's philosophy and vision of imparting technical and vocational training through education have been the foundational stones for the Indian education system. In the fast-growing world of today, education that promotes the capacity building of the students and increases their employability becomes a mandate and therefore Tagore's vision for education can become a milestone for reshaping the nation for its best time and again.

TVET and the Vision of Mahatma Gandhi

The concept of Basic Education, or *Nayi Talim* or *Buniyadi Siksha* was propounded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1937 at Wardha conference. *Nayi Talim* (Basic Education) is an embodiment of Gandhi's perception of an ideal society consisting of small self-reliant communities. The idea behind this was grounded on the 3Hs – Head, Hand and Heart, and was centered on productive work or vocations such as farming or agriculture, weaving, etc. *Nayi Talim* advocates that work and intelligence cannot be separated and the vocational needs of the society must be addressed through education. As children are creative and have the potential of constructing their own knowledge, thus *Nayi Talim* focuses on experiential learning of the evolving vocational requisites of the society that will make learners skilled for socially useful and productive work needed for living. Mahatma Gandhi envisioned for an education system in which intellectual work can be integrated with physical labor, that would lead to the development of a new order of equality of livelihood and academic opportunities at all strata of the society. This as a result would also promote co-operation, respect, culture, sensitivity, self – reliance and independence among the learners. Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi believed that the entire education should be imparted through the medium of productive craft/ vocation correlated with appropriate scientific concepts and processes. This according to Gandhi, would not only help the learners solve the problems of their livelihood but also make their learning even more insightful, concrete and applicable. Mahatma Gandhi also insisted that vocation-oriented education can promote dignity of labor among students which in turn would develop an attitude

among the learners to equally value manual and intellectual work. This would usher a revolutionary change not only in the thought process of the learners but also for the society and our work culture. In addition to this the vocation-oriented education may lead to a harmonious development of head, hand and heart.

NEP -2020 and Reimagining Vocational Education

National Education Policy 2020 strongly emphasizes on re-imagining vocational education. The NEP 2020 mentions the estimates from the 12th five- year plan (2012-2017) that less than 5% of the Indian workforce in the age – group 19-24 received formal education whereas the numbers in countries such as USA is 52%, Germany 75% and South Korea it is as high as 96%. This shows how urgent it is to fasten the spread of vocational education in India. According to NEP -2020 one of the important reasons behind a smaller number of students receiving vocational education is because it was focused largely on grade 11-12 and the dropouts in grade 8 and upwards in the past. Another important reason was the lack of well-defined pathways for the passing outs of grade 11-12 with vocational subjects to continue with their chosen vocations in higher education. Apart from this the common perception among students that vocational education is inferior to mainstream education largely affects the career choices of students in higher education. Thus NEP – 2020 strongly recommends for the re- imagination of how vocational education is offered to students in the future.

Conclusion

Thoughts and philosophies of the eminent philosophers like Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi have always been the foundation for various educational policies and education commissions in India. As education serves as the primary tool for making people aware of the opportunities that can transform their lives and to keep in pace with the “survival of the fittest” game of the ever-evolving world, the learners should be made competent and skilled enough in multidimensional aspects so as to be 21st century workforce ready. With the emerging technological advances, innovative techniques of technical and vocational learning should be incorporated by integrating TVET with artificial intelligence, machine learning, automation etc. Moreover, technical and vocational education should be imparted through various modes including the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode along with blended teaching learning approaches, so that there can be varied avenues to train and make learners ready for the international market. Apart from these, life-long learning opportunities in the area of TVET should be undertaken in a well-planned and structured way so as to induce required competencies and skill-sets among the learners. Thus, it is high time to revise and reframe the education system of India taking insights from the educational philosophies of great educationists and nationalists like Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi and by integrating technical and vocational education along with the mainstream education with newer methods and measures so as to meet the technological advances of the time. Furthermore, education should also be revisited and revitalized in regards to the efforts made by Indian government like Make in India, Digital India, life skill education and lifelong education. As mentioned in the NEP -2020 the vocational growth and capacity building of the learners is very important in order to prepare them to face the social and economic challenges in life. Thus, re-imagining Technical and Vocational Education

and Training can pave the path for a revolutionary change inculcating the spirit of entrepreneurship and in the making of a self – reliant India.

Suggestive Measures

Some of the suggestive measures for the re-imagination of TVET are as follows:

- Reframing TVET grounded in the philosophies of Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi.
- Re-imagining TVET with the integration of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning.
- Understanding the grass-root reality, issues and needs of the learners to enhance the effect of TVET
- Promoting qualitative researches to understand the perception, mindsets and views of the learners and the role TVET can play in addressing their academic and professional needs.

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