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Alternative Schooling and Indian Knowledge System: A Review study

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Introduction:

The Indian system of education roots its origin in the Vedic period. The education in that time was carried by the Brahmins and they were considered to be the most knowledgeable person as they were the storehouse of Vedas and hymns. Earlier students used to stay with the Gurus in the Gurukul and had to follow their guidance. During the medieval period, the education was imparted through Madrasas and Maktabas where the knowledge on 3R's was given i.e Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Subjects like history, politics, logic, grammar etc. were introduced at that time. The modern period emerges with the advent of the Britishers. The charter act of 1813 is the greatest turn which brought the major change in the Indian education system. The committees and commissions made were for the development of the universities, schools and teachers, their stipends and the curriculum (Rawat,1956). Indian education reached to a higher level after independence with the inception of the Mudaliar commission, Kothari commission, National Education Policy 1968, 1986, Program of action 1992 and establishment of the other agencies.

The Indian knowledge system which is the package of indigenous knowledge that roots in India. The IKS comprises of Jnan, Vignan, and Jeevan Darshan that have evolved out of experience, observation, experimentation, and rigorous analysis by Indians. The IKS include tribal knowledge, indigenous and traditional learning methods which will cover and include mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, yoga, architecture, medicine, agriculture, engineering, linguistics, literature, sports, games, as well as governance, polity and conservation, courses in tribal ethno-medicinal practices, forest management, traditional (organic) cultivation, natural farming, etc. will also be made available (Mandavkar,2023). It is that bundle of disciplines that is befitted for all the domains i.e Cognitive, Affective and Psychomotor.

The emergence of Alternative schools can be marked long back when the British education system was prevailing in India, meanwhile the philosophers such as Mahatma Gandhi, Savitri bai Phule, Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Vivekananda etc. (Purohit,2014), in his study stated that, Rabindranath Tagore pointed out limitations of schools set up by colonial authorities, in his book 'Shikshar Her Fer' published in the year 1893 and 'Shikshar Bahan' published in the year 1915. Tagore set up his own alternative to the prevailing

educational system: Vishwa Bharti in Santiniketan, Bengal, where classes were, and still are, held in the lap of nature. Gandhiji developed Nai Taleem or Basic Education – students devoting a few hours daily to academic pursuits, and the rest of the day to the performance of ‘bread labor’ – craft-work, agriculture, cooking, cleaning and related tasks. This approach to education aimed at strengthening village life and communities. Gijubhai Badheka emphasized primarily on children’s need for an atmosphere nurturing independence and self- reliance. His idea of an institutional basis was manifested by establishing Bal Mandir in Gujrat in 1920. Methods and techniques on how to teach history, geography, language and other subjects through stories and rhymes, in a way that appealed to children was taught by him. Krishnamurti set up two schools in 1930s, Rajghat Besant School in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh and the Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh. Sri Aurobindo and his mother inaugurated the idea of ‘integral education’ in which all dimensions of the growing child, physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual are addressed. Sri Aurobindo International Centre for Education (SAICE) was established in Pondicherry in 1943, also known as the Ashram School, the mother’s work here laid the foundations for practicing integral education, and free progress.

Objectives of the study:

1. To explore the existing status and role of alternative schools in India.
2. To analyze the integration of Indian Knowledge System into alternative schools.

Methodology:

The present study is carried using analytical method. For the analysis different literatures have been reviewed.

Integration of IKS and alternative school:

India is a country having diverse cultures, traditions, tribes, communities, ethnicities and enriched with indigenous knowledge all across the nation. With this, the wide classification of tribal knowledge and indigenous education also comes into count (Mandavkar,2023). Where people from remote areas are still deprived of mainstream education and the drop out is constant, the indigenous education and teaching methods could only be used to resonate the people from different communities. The National Education Policy 2020 has emphasized mostly in integrating IKS in school and higher education in different disciplines with an aim to infuse education with the perspective of IKS to offer students a holistic worldview that encompasses various facets of life (Jagadesh Kumar2024). Alternative school is a non-traditional educational setting for students who may not be able to succeed in a traditional school environment. There are many schools both govt initiated and private or non-profit organizations that work to provide education to the different unreached communities, to the differently abled children, drop outs and underprivileged students. These schools introduce education as per their forte, livelihood, skill development, indigenous and life resonating, value based and to build a responsible citizen and methods which is inclusive in nature and child centric. The Vishwa Bharti in Santiniketan, Bengal, is the first alternative school where classes were, and still are, held in the lap of nature. Gandhiji developed Nai Taleem or Basic Education – students devoting a few hours daily to academic pursuits, and the rest of the day to the performance of ‘bread labor’ – craft-work, agriculture, cooking, cleaning and related tasks. His approach to education basically aimed at strengthening village life and communities. Gijubhai Badheka emphasized on children’s need for an atmosphere nurturing independence and self- reliance. He gave this idea an institutional basis by establishing Bal Mandir in Gujrat in 1920. He showed how to teach history, geography, language and other subjects through stories and rhymes, in a way that appealed to children. Krishnamurti set up two schools in 1930s, Rajghat Besant School in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh and the Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh. Sri Aurobindo and his mother inaugurated the idea of ‘integral education’ in which all dimensions of the growing child, physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual are addressed. In this 21st century, there are many other schools which are

alternative by nature such as; Anand Niketan is a non-profit organization from Nasik teaches students garbage management and to construct low-cost toilets. Shreyas from Ahmedabad is a school where yoga, karate, swimming, drama, painting, sculpture, dancing, music and art is taught. Namma Shale, from Bangalore is a school where work is divided into two aspects: the practical work emanating from the farm, store, and community work; and the educational studies. Sita school, society for educational exploration from Bangalore is a small school where a number of practical activities are encouraged including stitching, clay work, printing and gardening. The school also has a small screen-printing workshop that enables its students to contribute towards their own needs (Vitachi, Raghavan, Raj 2007). Vidya the living school from Assam is a school where students are taught livelihood skill, wellbeing skills. They are taught organic farming, mask making, poultry. Humming bird school from Assam also emphasis on labor force enhancing agriculture, local weaving and other skills. Also, there are number of schools who intends to promote classical languages in their vicinity. Kaliyuva mane is a school which provides unique learning experiences through unique initiatives like Kids Bank, Kids Court, and Skill training Center to promote life skills among the children and enable them to face real life situations (V Ramadas, 2023). As mentioned in NEP2020 if these schools are provided adequate support and aid to promote more such ethnic and indigenous education in rural unreached areas and communities more layman can be turned into potential resources for our country. IKS can be transferred orally by the generation, so thus the teachers from alternative schools practice folklore sessions, community meets where local people transact and teach traditional knowledge. The integration of IKS into education can be approached in a manner that promotes inclusivity, diversity, and cultural appreciation. The IKS considers subjects such as Humanities, Engineering, Medicine, Agriculture, Community knowledge systems, Fine and Performing arts, Vocational skills, etc. which have IKS content. The courses must have a clear mapping of the traditional subjects in IKS with the modern subjects such as Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Agriculture, etc. The indulgence of IKS in education system aims to solve the contemporary and emerging problems of India and world by using our ancient knowledge systems. As cited by (Jagdes K 2024), as an example that innovations like the Mitticool refrigerator, using traditional clay cooling techniques, can be a sustainable solution for rural communities which indicates the significance of harmonizing IKS with modern technology. With such vocational based education, a huge percentage of people who are unskilled, illiterate and unemployed could be gear up with for the promotion of the country. NEP2020 recognizes that the knowledge of the rich diversity of India should be imbibed first hand by learners. This would include activities, such as student tours to various regions of the country. This will not only promote tourism but also help in developing an awareness and appreciation of India's diversity, culture and traditions, as well as knowledge around nook and corner of the nation.

Conclusion:

Indian knowledge system and alternative school can be seen through the same lens and these two entities can be clubbed to achieve the anticipated goal of NEP2020. Vikshit Bharat, is the motto till 2047 with an aim to create a robust education system and this could be achieved if every school in nook and corner of the country become functional. National Education Policy 2020 is the first education policy of the 21st century to transform the Indian education system using holistic development of the learners (Qaisur,2024). The new education policy NEP 2020 talks about making the learning environment more experiential based, creativity and constructive based and brainstorming to facilitate the 21st century learners. To bring such a constructive and enthusiastic environment in schools, subjects more of like- fine-arts, classical dance, agriculture, clay art, puppetry, drama, music, sports, historical monuments visit, field trip, excursions, classical language learning, yoga, weaving, sustainable development etc. should be added. Hence, the traditional form of knowledge will not only make a person more resourceful and self- sufficient but also make the nation richer in skills and invested resulting in less brain drain.

Impact statement:

The study on integration of IKS and Alternative Schooling will present in the society a different lens to look through into the challenges existing in the education system. Alternative schools are community driven or experiential based school which promotes new knowledge whereas IKS talks about promoting the aboriginal and indigenous education or knowledge to the greater society. If we dive deep into this study, it will help further to go through many new ideas and findings for enhancing Indian knowledge through this alternative schools and institutes, also this study will open doors to many researchers and academicians to bring a bigger and better perspective to explore.

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