



PHILOSOPHICAL

FOUNDATIONS OF

EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Education is the hallmark of any civilized society and a robust, vibrant and holistic education is essential to ensure all-round development of an individual. Every nation needs an educational philosophy for building up a sound system of education. India too has passed through various stages of development during different periods from Brahmanistic to monastic, scholastic to realistic, idealistic and pragmatic trends when values changed and new priorities emerged.

In the present century however, gradual decline and loss of values and the menacing spread of vices have become a global concern. Explosion of knowledge has not been accompanied by complementary enhancement of human values. The major issue that remains is how to ensure the needed character development and how to overcome the chasm between knowledge of values and realization of values. This situation calls for a new paradigm of education on the basis of deep philosophical thinking.



SERIES INTRODUCTION

Let us learn about the entire spectrum of Education in India through multiple documents of this Education Series. Starting from a general and in depth understanding of educational philosophies, we will be discussing salient aspects of School and Higher Education systems in India.

In this document we will learn about the meaning and true purpose of education, various schools of thought in Education and their present relevance, How these philosophical ideas have manifested in India's Education System over the years and How the vision of India's New Education Policy aims at creating a new education system that is aligned with the aspirational goals of 21st century education while building upon India's traditions and value systems.

WHAT IS EDUCATION AND WHAT PURPOSE DOES IT SERVE IN LIFE AND FOR NATION BUILDING?

The word 'Education' is derived from two words 'e' (from inside) and 'duco' (to develop), which combined together mean 'to make something grow or develop from within'.

Education is therefore the act or process of importing or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgement and generally of preparing oneself or other intellectually for life.



ROLE OF EDUCATION IN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S LIFE

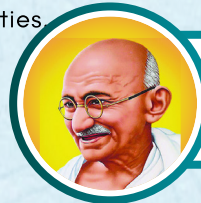
The Developmental Mould of Education: The Vedic seers addressed humans as *amṛtasya putrāḥ*, which implies that we are no doubt finite but we are born with infinite potentialities. Quality education therefore ensures:

Character Development: A human being in order to be called a "person" in the true sense has to develop and excel in three qualities: Awareness (*viveka*), Capacity to exercise free will (*icchā-svātantrya, svarāt*) and Responsible for his or her conduct (*bhoktā*). Four cardinal virtues—*maitrī* (universal friendship), *karuṇā* (universal compassion), *muditā* (universal benevolence) and *upekṣā* (selflessness and equanimity)—can envelop all these qualities and only through proper education can this self-realization be achieved.

Personality Enhancement: Education ensures the all-round development of an individual and provides opportunities for the fullest possible efflorescence of inherent potentialities and enhances the capabilities to realize this.

Direction: Through the process of education children receive necessary knowledge, skill and orientation to decide their own goals of life and guidance on ways to achieve these goals in socially acceptable and desirable channels.

Empowerment: Education makes individuals fit for their environments - both natural and socio-cultural through the development of their abilities and emancipates them from ignorance, superstitions, false beliefs and moral infirmity.



"By education. I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man - body, mind and spirit". - Mahatma Gandhi

IS 'LEARNING' SAME AS 'EDUCATION'?

Learning is a process which results in **more or less permanent modification of behaviour as a result of practice or experience**. In contrast, education is concerned with **harmonious development of human abilities and powers** according to the needs of the individual and the society.

While **learning can be either positive or negative, education is always positive** from the point of view of social values. For example, learning may even result in such socially unacceptable behaviour patterns as stealing. But learning such negative behaviour can never be termed as education.

Thus, there is a kind of **'master-worker' relationship** between education and learning. **Education employs and utilizes the learning process** to serve its own broad goals of developing harmonious personalities.



"Education is the manifestation of divine perfection already existing in man". - Adikavi Sankaracharya

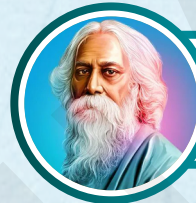
The Spiritual Mould of Education: Several definitions of education presuppose that every human soul is a part of that totality which is manifested in God, and purpose of education is to realize that divine macrocosm in ourself by working for the welfare of all those others who are also a part of it.



"Education is realization of the cosmic self". - Vivekananda

The Social Mould of Education: Education performs a threefold social function by maintaining, transmitting and creating social values, ideals, beliefs and culture in the following ways:

- ▶ **Fulfilment of social needs:** Education acts as a liberating force from poverty and deprivation, stagnation and decadence and is a preparation for life, for living with dignity and joy.
- ▶ **Process of socialization:** Education is considered as a sub-system of society, and hence, it is an instrument and platform for furthering social cause and interests.
- ▶ **Enabler of Social change and progress:** A society is composed of individuals and when the ideas of individuals change the society is bound to change. The function of education is to maintain this progressive trend.
- ▶ **Hallmark of Civil Society:** A value-oriented education transforms human life from a savage to a civilized state of existence. It broadens the vision and enlarges the heart and thus paves the way for mutual caring and sharing, by making humans live together in peace and harmony.



"Education is that which makes one's life in harmony with all existences" - Rabindranath Tagore

ROLE OF EDUCATION IN NATION BUILDING

Education plays an integral role in the development and functioning of a nation. Equality in educational opportunities for all individuals is considered one of the fundamental necessities for Nation Building.



"Educate and raise the masses, and thus alone a nation is possible." - Swami Vivekananda



The right ways to understand the nature and need of education, methods in which it can be done and what its ideals should be, is best understood by understanding various philosophies associated with Education.

In Conversation!

Educating Mind vs Educating Heart



Vinay: Hello Vini, I was reading one of the Aristotle's quote but could not understand its meaning. Could you please help me understand the quotation - "**Educating Mind Without Educating Heart is no education at all.**"

Vini: Hello Vinay, you can understand it this way..

While "educating the mind" means acquiring knowledge, "educating the heart," means cultivating wisdom which would entail an understanding of the meaning and use of that knowledge. This is more concerned with the qualities that make us human, such as empathy, emotional intelligence, altruism, and so on.

Vinay: Ok.. So is it the balance between **Intelligence Quotient and Emotional Quotient?**

Vini: Yes, you got it right Vinay!

Vinay: Can you give some real-life examples to differentiate between the two?

Vini: For example, a terrorist like Osama Bin Laden, a chemical engineer by profession, used all his knowledge to do worst inhuman and barbaric activities and thus proved dangerous for the humanity. On the other hand, Mahatma Gandhi was a successful lawyer yet chose to work for the downtrodden and gave maximum importance to human dignity.

Vinay: Ok, I got it. So that means it is the education of the heart and not just the education of the mind which is required if we are to live a fulfilled life. Thank you Vini!

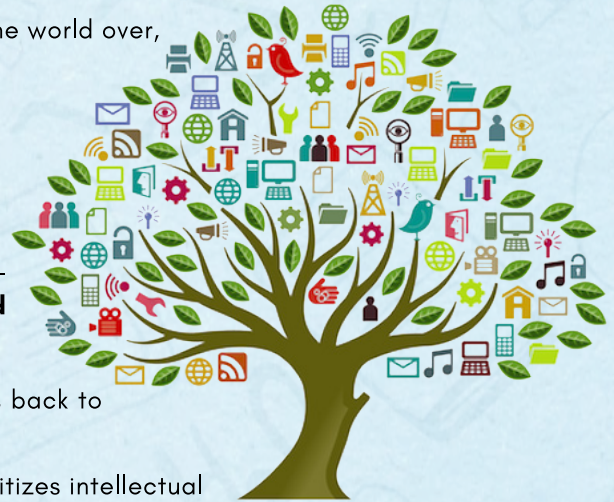


WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT IN EDUCATION AND WHAT RELEVANCE DO THEY HOLD IN THE PRESENT TIMES?

The philosophy of education has been a topic of interest for philosophers the world over, and still generates a lot of debate and interest.

TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHIES IN EDUCATION

- Naturalism:** It was propounded by thinkers like Herbert Spencer, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Naturalist believes that **good education can be possible only through direct contact with nature.**
- Idealism:** It is the oldest system of philosophy, the origin of which goes back to ancient India in the East and to Plato in the West.
 - Idealism **emphasizes the spiritual side of man.** So, the school prioritizes intellectual activities, moral judgement, aesthetic judgement, self-realization, individual freedom, individual responsibility and self-control in order to achieve this development.
 - Indian proponents of this philosophy like **Sri Aurobindo**, gave importance to moral, religious and physical education and wanted to make them a compulsory part of education at primary and secondary levels.
- Pragmatism:** It is popularly regarded as an indigenous American philosophy. But it's roots can be traced to ancient Greek philosophy.
 - They **emphasize functional knowledge and understanding** and refute standard, permanent and eternal values. According to this philosophy, the aim of education is to teach one how to think so that one can adjust to an ever changing society.



*In Conversation!***The Pathways of Education**

Vinay: Vini, I believe formal education is possible only by going to school. How can Nature teach us anything??

Vini: Vinay, everything in Nature has its own developmental cycle and process, be it the formation of clouds, growth of plants etc. Through careful observation, we can notice the harmonious balance, creativity, absence of overexploitation and integrated growth. **Nature thus teaches us values such as Compassion, Empathy, peaceful coexistence and sustainability.**

Vinay: But our present education system doesn't focus on such practical learnings from nature. Does that mean it is taking us away from the nature?

Vini: Yes, this the major reason for rise in consumerist culture leading to consequences such as climate change, widespread deforestation, environmental pollution etc.

Vinay: This nature based learning seems to be the ideal way of learning!

Vini: Yes, it is indeed one of them. Realising the divine self within us by inculcating qualities such as responsible behaviour and self-control can help us learn and grow as well. Do you know that it is lack/absence of these qualities in humans which is leading to social vices such as crime, terrorism, objectification of women among others.

Vinay: I agree. But don't you think that focussing too much on development of these ethical values hinders humanity's progress? We get educated so that we can get a good job and earn a living. Where is the place for this idealism in practical life?

Vini: This is what the pragmatist philosophy teaches us. We do need to focus on the utilitarian aspect of education as per the present needs but that has to be in sync with nature as well as the value system.

Vinay: Can you elaborate it further?

Vini: See, for example, in the current era of technological advancements, we cannot focus only on our ancient system of Vedic education. We need to be progressive and technologically updated. But at the same time, we cannot compromise with basic human values or harm nature in the name of progress. Here, the role of ancient value system and nature-based learning comes into play.

Vinay: So, that means each of these philosophies focus on a particular aspect of living but only a perfect blend of these could help in building a robust and holistic education system!

**CONTEMPORARY INDIAN PHILOSOPHIES OF EDUCATION**

Contemporary Indian Philosophy of Education trends that gained prominence include- Revivalism of ancient knowledge, Rationalism, Nationalism, Positivism, Scientific temper etc. Contemporary Indian philosophers of education like Jawaharlal Nehru, M.N.Roy and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan focussed on these philosophies and their incorporation in the Education System for dealing with the contemporary problems.

📖 **Revivalism:** It believes that contemporary Indian Education should follow the ancient ideals, values and models of social relationships using modern means of communication, audio-visual instruments etc. for more effective teaching.

📖 **Rationalism :** Developed during the 17th century; it states that **knowledge comes through reason** and is based on the following concepts:

👉 **Innate knowledge:** Rationalists argue that we are not born with minds like blind slates, but even before we experience the world we know some things. For example, the way two children view the same object as ugly and beautiful is due to innate knowledge.

👉 **Intuition/deduction:** There are some truths that can be worked out independent of experience of the world, though not known innately. Examples of such truths include logic, mathematics, or ethical truths.

📖 **Nationalism:** It is reflected in education as the nation looks to pass on the cultural heritage, to develop patriotism and loyalty to a nation.

👉 Its effects on education were studied by Isaac Kandel and Edward Reiser, who identified- **three primary themes** reflected in the curriculum.

📖 **All nations have a history.** The combination of the nation's history and myths creates a nation's collective memory which evokes the same response throughout the nation's public. For example, when the national anthem is played, the response evoked is almost universally that of profound respect.

REASON VS. EXPERIENCE: WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE?

There is a theory known as **Empiricism** that states that **knowledge comes only or primarily from sensory experience**. John Locke, one of the most famous empiricists stated that **mind is a blank slate** when we enter the world and it is only later, through the **acquisition of experience** that we gain knowledge and information.

However, if knowledge comes only through experience, it is impossible for us to talk about something that we have not experienced. This claim questions the validity of religious and ethical concepts; since these concepts cannot be observed or experienced.

Therefore, **both reason and experience can be sources of knowledge**. Language acquisition can be taken as an example of this. Although experience is needed to perfect a language, a certain amount of intuition, deduction, and innate knowledge are also required to acquire a language.



📖 **Helping people recognize that they are unique individuals**, different from others within the nation. Teaching each individual that his or her voice counts and demonstrating this within the political system is evidence of nationalism.

📖 **Allows people to identify with a particular territory** that has borders, a name, a capital, and a relatively common culture in most instances.

📖 **Positivism** : It **limits knowledge to statements of observable fact based on sense perceptions and the investigation of objective reality**. It is the teachers' job to make sure directions are clear and students understand what and how they will be learning. Through repetition and practice with different media, students are expected to have a clear understanding of the topic studied.

📖 **Eclecticism**: Eclecticism is a conceptual approach that does not hold rigidly to a single paradigm or set of assumptions, but instead draws upon multiple theories, styles, or ideas to gain complementary insights into a subject, or applies different theories in particular cases.

➤ This approach **includes every kind of learning activity**, saves learner from monotony and gives a chance to our common sense to mould and shape our method according to the circumstances. It is **more appropriate for Pre School learning** where children discover and instil good ways of learning.

Relevance of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan's educational thoughts in Today's India:



Dr. Radhakrishnan considered education as acquisition of knowledge beyond what is academic and professional. His educational thoughts hold significance even today, especially in the realm of character development and instilling of moral values:

📖 **No strict demarcation of disciplines**: Radhakrishnan was of the opinion that, science helps us to build up our outer life, but other disciplines like Social studies or Humanities are necessary to strengthen and refine the living spirit.

📖 **Emphasis on spiritual education**: Education aimed at fostering spiritual values, good manners, honesty and fellow-feeling holds great relevance in modern times, particularly to tackle disconnection with mind, body and other fellow beings in this age of science and technology.

📖 **National Integration**: Religious education, mass education programmes like social services, community living, and study of social services were emphasized for the development of nationalism.

📖 **International Understanding**: He emphasized education as a means for creating International understanding and mutual cohesion among the people across the border which is essential to eliminate various problems like terrorism, environmental pollution, poverty, unemployment and diseases from the world.

📖 **Teacher-Education Relationship**: Education for high ideals of life with good teacher- taught relationship like that of ancient order can be a panacea for many social ills, evils and troubles and helps in creating a sense of fellow-feeling, cohesion and attitude of sharing among the students.

Moreover, he strongly advocated for free and compulsory education for all the children of the country irrespective of caste, creed, gender and socio-economic status and believed in education that taught **Ethical politics** which focuses on human welfare and happiness.

TO WHAT EXTENT THESE PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS HAVE MANIFESTED IN INDIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM AND HOW THESE SYSTEMS HAVE FARED IN FULFILLING THEIR PURPOSE?

Education has been a place of honour in Indian culture. Since the advent of civilization, educational institutions have existed in India and the system has evolved in various ways over the period of time as per the changing priorities:

📖 **Ancient India/Vedic System of Education**: The Vedic education emphasized upon holistic development of the individual by taking care of both the inner and the outer self. The system followed the tenets of Vedas and Upanishads and focused on the moral, physical, spiritual and intellectual aspects of life and imparting ethics like humility, truthfulness, discipline, self-reliance, and respecting all creations to the students.

**Positives (+)**

- 📖 The system focused on the **all-round development of students**.
- 📖 More emphasis was given to **practical knowledge** rather than theoretical knowledge.
- 📖 There was **no pressure laid on students related to studies** so that they can learn effectively.
- 📖 The **government did not interfere** with the formation of curriculum, kings at that time helped in the development of education.

Negatives (-)

- 📖 The system was responsible for the **division of society into Varnas(Caste)** as Gurukuls were only open to the Upper castes of the Indian society and the overwhelming **masses were denied any formal education**.
- 📖 **Women were not admitted** to the Gurukuls.

How the ancient system of education took care of the holistic development of child?

The Vedic education system was imparted to the student, called *Shishyas* under the supervision of Guru, in a secluded place, known as *Gurukul*. Here, life served as the laboratory for the educational experimentation in the various ways such as:

- 📖 **Knowledge related to life:** The students used to live away from the material world amidst natural surroundings and studied sitting at the feet of his teacher comprehending all the intricate problems of life through listening and meditation.
- 📖 **Close association between teacher and student resulted in all round development** accompanied by a sense of devoted service.
- 📖 **Development in social work:** It was student's sacred duty to collect fuelwood, supply water and do other household odd jobs for the teacher.
- 📖 **Vocational training:** Students were given training in occupations of animal husbandry, agriculture and dairy farming etc. by engaging them in associated tasks in the premise of Gurukul.
- 📖 **Fostering humanitarian virtues:** Begging alms by the pupils for their own subsistence and service of the Guru inculcated values such as humility.

- 📖 **Islamic Education System:** The main objective of education during the medieval period was the spread of knowledge and the propagation of Islam. Traditional madrassas and Maktabas were the Islamic center for education. Their teachings varied from practical studies to inculcation of moral and spiritual values based on Islamic doctrines, social traditions and political principles.

Positives (+)

- 📖 **Practical education** was given more importance.
- 📖 **Students and teacher's relations** were good.
- 📖 Students were taught from the basics and rulers also supported the development of education.

Negatives (-)

- 📖 **Religious and Islamic education** was given more importance.
- 📖 The student aimed to **focus on leadership for ruling the country**.

- 📖 **The English Education System:** After the British East India Company began its expansion in the Indian subcontinent, a **need for utilitarian education was felt** for the common masses to enhance the communication between the British rule and its subjects. As a result, **downward filtration theory** was brought.

- 📖 The introduction of the English language in the curriculum along with science and mathematics were considered utilitarian subjects while subjects like metaphysics and philosophy were considered unnecessary.
- 📖 These reforms later came to be known as **Macaulayism** and became the basis of or current education system in India.



WE MUST AT PRESENT DO OUR BEST TO FORM A CLASS WHO MAY BE INTERPRETERS BETWEEN US AND THE MILLIONS WHOM WE GOVERN: A CLASS OF PERSONS, INDIAN IN BLOOD AND COLOR, BUT ENGLISH IN TASTE, IN OPINIONS, IN MORALS, AND IN INTELLECT.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY -

Positives (+)	Negatives (-)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of technology in learning. Many programs and missions were started to increase the employment in India. Top class universities and colleges with good infrastructure and environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interference of government in education, management, and syllabus. Lack of quality teaching as well as the environment in government schools and colleges. Increase in fees of private institutes and lack of connectivity in rural areas created inequalities. Lack of practical knowledge orientation. Confined teaching to classrooms and the link with nature was broken. Superficial relationship between the teacher and the student.

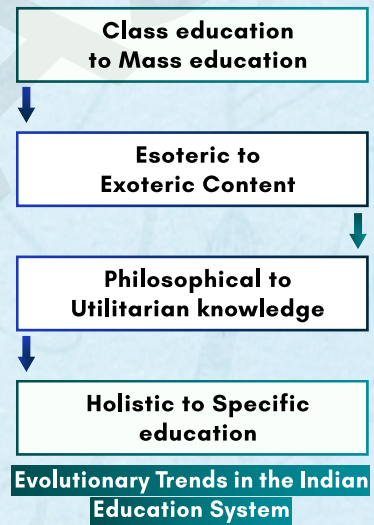
In the preceding years, several commissions were set up for the contemplation of the Indian Education system. Although, the core objective of these commissions was ingrained with the notion of generating more skilled manpower for fuelling the ever-growing Industrialisation of the era.

Post-Independence Education System: The colonial-era education system continued to prevail up until two decades, post-independence.

First National Policy, 1968, brought on the basis of report and recommendations of the Kothari Commission (1964-1966) proposed radical restructuring of the Education system to achieve **national integration and greater cultural and economic development**.

Second national policy of education, 1986 was implemented by the government that focused on "special emphasis on the **removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity**," especially for Indian women and the backward classes of society.

The government in India has been continuously paying attention to education in India and making every move possible to educate each and every child in India as a basic right. As a result, the literacy rate is climbing up the stairs, but there are bottlenecks in the process, nevertheless.



WHAT ARE THE PERSISTING PROBLEMS IN THE PRESENT INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM?

Focus on Scoring rather than learning: The form of curriculum designed by Britishers is still in place now where too much emphasis is given on getting good grades than achieving an all-round development. As a result, bookish knowledge is being passed down to generations of students.

Theoretical mode of teaching: There is no space for creative learning and thinking and students are always bound to a specific syllabus and are not really encouraged to go out and learn.

All work No Play : The year-end results and board examinations in the Indian education sphere hold utmost significance and not getting enough marks may subject students to a series of mental bullying, humiliation, and loss of confidence. Sports, art & craft, extra-curricular activities aren't held in high regard by society, parents, and institutions.

Lack of Individuality: All students have to study the same subjects and go through the same method of education irrespective of student's interest and abilities.

Teaching Methodology: Our teaching methodology is highly monotonous and there is a dearth of mobility and agility in it. Even though there has been a wave of the switch to the E-learning mode, but that has happened in a very small proportion.

Lack of Functional Literacy: With focus on rote learning for getting good grades, functional literacy of concepts has been totally zoned out.

The irony of the situation is that we have become conditioned to this mode of living. But the persisting issues have taken us to a situation where we are witnessing severe crisis of loss of character and valuelessness in our children resulting in all-round destructive behaviour.

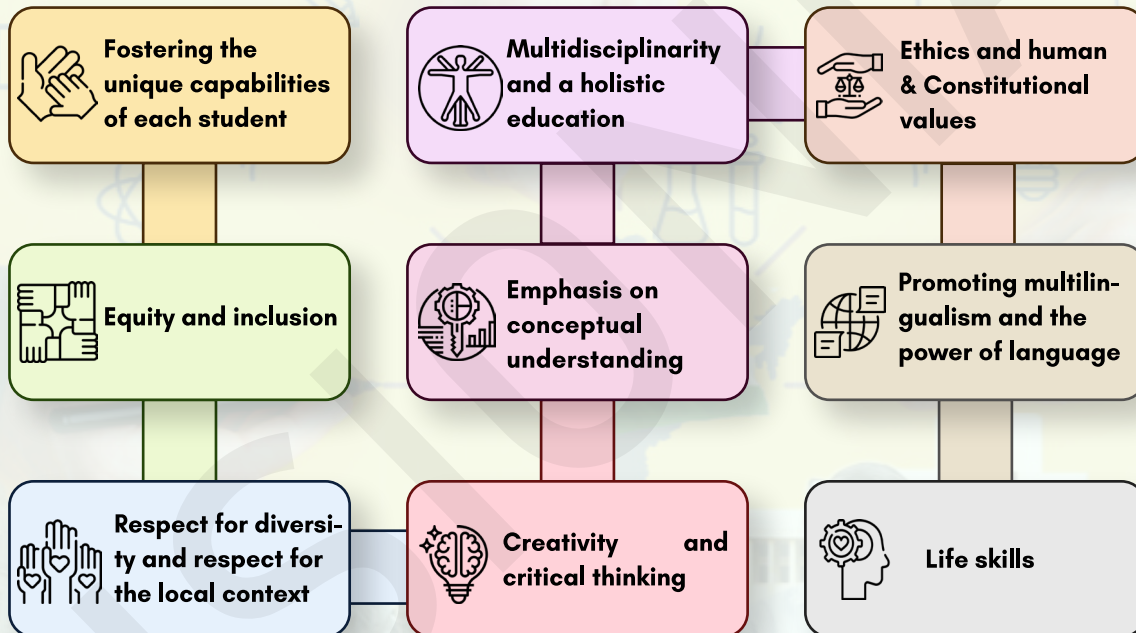


HOW NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY 2020 AIMS TO CARRY FORWARD THE PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS TO REVAMP INDIA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM?

NEP 2020 envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society. It aims to provide high-quality education to all, and thereby make India a global knowledge superpower.

The vision of the Policy is to instil among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought, but also in **spirit, intellect, and deeds**, as well as to develop knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that support **responsible commitment to human rights, sustainable development and living, and global well-being**, thereby reflecting a truly global citizen.

The fundamental principles that will guide both the education system at large, as well as the individual institutions within it are:



The manifestation of these principles at various levels in the education system will be dealt with in the subsequent documents on School Education and Higher Education.

Stay Tuned!



TOPIC AT A GLANCE

Education and its role

Word 'Education' is derived from two words 'e' (from inside) and 'duco' (to develop), which combined together mean 'to make something grow or develop from within'.

Role in individual's life

- 📖 **Developmental:** Character Development, Personality Enhancement, Direction and Empowerment.
- 📖 **Spiritual:** To help realize the divine within.
- 📖 **Social:** Fulfilment of social needs, Furthering social cause and interests, Enabler of Social change and progress and Hallmark of Civil Society.

"By education. I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in the child and man - body, mind and spirit". -

Mahatma Gandhi

Role in nation building

- 📖 **Economic development**
- 📖 **Cultivation of talents** and practical virtues
- 📖 **Realisation of human resource potential**
- 📖 Strengthening Social cohesion thereby **National Integration**
- 📖 **Fostering democratic values**
- 📖 **Establishing a socialistic pattern of society**
- 📖 **Fostering secular as well as cosmopolitan outlook**
- 📖 **Synthesizing Cultural and Scientific Values**

"Educate and raise the masses, and thus alone a nation is possible."- Swami Vivekananda

Schools of thought in Education and their relevance

Traditional

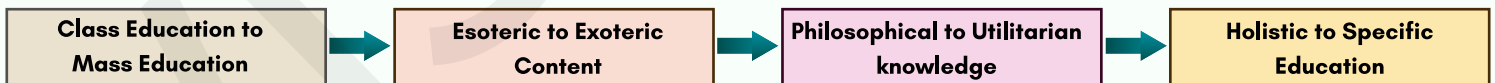
- 📖 **Naturalism:** Good education can be possible only through direct contact with nature. Nature teaches us values such as Compassion, Empathy, peaceful coexistence and sustainability.
- 📖 **Idealism:** Emphasizes the spiritual side of man and inculcating qualities such as responsible behaviour and self-control that can help us learn and grow as well.
- 📖 **Pragmatism:** Emphasizes functional knowledge and understanding i.e. to teach one how to think so that one can adjust to an ever changing society.

Contemporary

- 📖 **Revivalism:** Following ancient ideals and values using modern means of communication.
- 📖 **Rationalism & Empiricism:** Source of knowledge in both is reason and experience respectively.
- 📖 **Nationalism:** Propagating cultural heritage to develop patriotism and loyalty to a nation.
- 📖 **Positivism:** Limits knowledge to statements of observable fact.
- 📖 **Eclecticism:** Gaining insights from multiple theories and applying them in different ways of learning.

Evolution of philosophical manifestations in Indian Education System

From Ancient/Vedic Education System to Modern Education System →



Challenges in the present Indian Education System

- 📖 **Focus on Scoring** rather than learning
- 📖 **Theoretical mode of teaching** and no space for creative learning
- 📖 **Sports, art & craft, extra-curricular activities are side-lined**
- 📖 **Lack of Individuality** of learners
- 📖 **Outdated teaching methodology**
- 📖 **Lack of Functional Literacy**

NEP 2020 and its vision

Through various fundamental principles at every level of the India's education system, the policy aims to build an education system which is rooted in Indian ethos and contributes directly to transforming India, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society.