

Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education and India's National Education Policy 2020: A Comparative Philosophical Analysis

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Abstract

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a radical change in the Indian education system that focuses on the holistic growth, multidisciplinary learning, and pedagogy, which is learner-centred. Interestingly, most of these principles echo previous philosophical visions that were expressed by Indian educational thinkers. One of them is Sri Aurobindo with his notion of Integral Education, which is a complex system which tends to focus more on the coordinated growth of the physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual levels of human personality. This paper is a comparative philosophical inquiry that aims at exploring the conceptual connexion between the educational ideology of Sri Aurobindo and the guiding ideals of NEP 2020. A qualitative approach to philosophy is used in the research, where textual and conceptual analysis of the main writings by Sri Aurobindo and the official policy document of NEP 2020 can be employed. By using the thematic comparison, it becomes possible to see that the areas of convergence are numerous: they are holistic education, multidisciplinary learning, experiential pedagogy, multilingual education, and adapting Indian knowledge systems. The results indicate that much of the central concepts within NEP 2020 echo philosophical concepts expressed by Aurobindo in Integral Education over one hundred years ago. Yet, at the same time that NEP 2020 is more mainly concerned with institutional and structural changes, Aurobindo philosophy offers a more comprehensive normative framework of the ethical development of self, and the development of human consciousness. The paper claims that adopting the philosophical practises of Integral Education will be able to enhance humanistic and ethical principles of modern education reforms besides bringing in a more holistic and culturally based education system in India.

Keywords: Sri Aurobindo, Integral Education, NEP 2020, Holistic Development, Experiential Learning, Multilingual Education, Educational Philosophy.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, education has been viewed as a powerful means to the human development, social change and the development of the democratic and knowledge based societies. In the modern educational dialogue, researchers accentuate more and more that education is not only able to transfer knowledge about disciplinary issues but also to promote the comprehensive

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human development, the moral logic, the ability to create, and critical thinking that are required to solve more complicated global problems (Biesta, 2015; Nussbaum, 2016). This increased understanding of education as a multidimensional process has forced most countries to re-evaluate the classic schooling norms and implement educational reforms that incorporate interdisciplinary learning, learner-centred pedagogy, and culturally responsive knowledge systems (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

In this world of educational change, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India is one of the broader policy modifications made in the system of Indian education since the independence. The policy aims at establishing a fair, inclusive, and diverse culture of knowledge through the reorganisation of the education system and facilitating the process of holistic and multidisciplinary education (Government of India, 2020). Several major principles are highlighted in NEP 2020, such as; experiential and inquiry-based learning, curriculum design flexibility, multilingual education, combining vocational and academic pathways, and revitalising Indian knowledge systems. Some scholars have contended that the policy is a great change towards instruction on memorisation rather than competency-based learning to help learners develop creativity, problem-solving skills and be responsible in a moral way (Tilak, 2021; Kumar, 2021).

Another highlight of NEP 2020 is that it focuses on holistic education that aims at incorporating cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical aspects of learning. Modern research on educational theory is increasingly in favour of holistic views, facing the argument that education should not only develop the intellect but should also be concerned with the general development of the human identity and moral agency (Biesta, 2015; Fullan, 2007). In addition, the policy promotes multidisciplinary learning and customised learning routes, which is consistent with the global trends that support the significance of combining different fields of knowledge to solve complex social issues (OECD, 2019).

Although NEP 2020 is a contemporary policy framework, most of the philosophical concepts implied in the document are echoed by the educational philosophy of previous Indian philosophers and reformers. Traditionally, Indian intellectual traditions have understood the educational process as a process of development of the entire personality of a human being. Other approaches to education expressed by educational thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo included an emphasis on experiential learning and cultural rootedness and the inclusion of ethical and spiritual values in the learning process (Raina, 2018). Their works in philosophy are still being used in the present-day discussions of educational reform and the place of the traditions of indigenous knowledge in the modern education systems.

Sri Aurobindo (1872 -1950) is one of those philosophers who have a special place in the history of the philosophy of education. Aurobindo created the holistic philosophical school known as the Integral Education that aims to bring in the harmonious growth of various aspects in our human being, which includes physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual (Aurobindo, 1990). Aurobindo believed that education cannot be limited to intellectual training but should help in the development of consciousness and achieve the inner potential of the person. This vision puts education in a more extended philosophical and spiritual context that incorporates

knowledge, ethics, creativity, and self-realisation.

In some of his works, especially *A System of National Education*, and *The Synthesis of Yoga*, he stated his educational philosophy, which focused on child-centred learning, education freedom, experiential knowledge, as well as development of intuition and creativeness. His vision of education foresees numerous modern educational theories, which promote the independence of learners, cross-disciplinary learning, and a holistic development (Raina, 2018). Moreover, Aurobindo tested much on the necessity of the cultural rootedness of education, saying that the educational system of a country should also be based on the cultural traditions and intellectual background.

Surprisingly, some of the principles of NEP 2020 such as holistic education, experiential learning, multilingualism, and the fusion of Indian knowledge systems seem to echo the concepts that are quite similar in the philosophical roots of Aurobindo Integral Education. The fact that the policy focuses on the learner-centred approach and the formation of the creative and ethical abilities of the students echoes heavily with Aurobindo vision of education as the process of transformation that should focus on the development of the human mind consciousness.

Nonetheless, even with this seeming point of conceptual overlap, the systematic academic investigation into the philosophical connexion between the educational thought of Sri Aurobindo and the guiding principles of NEP 2020 is comparatively underrepresented in modern educational studies. A majority of the current research pay attention either to policy analysis of NEP 2020 or to historical understanding of the philosophy of Aurobindo without paying enough attention to their conceptual overlaps.

Thus, the current research aims to conduct a philosophical comparison of the concept of Integral Education suggested by Sri Aurobindo and the principles of the national education policy established in India, 2020. Through exploring the philosophical overlap between the classical Indian account of education and the recent policy changes, the research will also help to learn more about how indigenous philosophical perspectives may be used to shape the creation of holistic and culturally-focused educational models in the contemporary India.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Holistic Education and Human Development

The educational theory has laid stress on holistic education as one of its dominant themes in recent years as education has focused on the progressive cultivation of the entire being instead of the narrow learning of cognitive capabilities. Researchers present the argument that the contemporary education systems have to get past the rather instrumentalistic aims of economic output and standardised testing and evolve into the more general objective of human wellness, moral intelligence, and civic duty (Biesta, 2015; Nussbaum, 2016). Holistic education tries to incorporate intellectual, emotional, social and moral aspects of education thus trying to bring about well established individuals who are able to handle the complex issues in the world.

The studies in educational philosophy and pedagogy are increasingly pointing to the necessity of incorporating numerous spheres of human development into the sphere of education practise.

According to (Palmer et al., 2010), education should not only develop intellectual competence, but also empathy, ethical consciousness and reflective awareness. Likewise, (Fullan, 2007) focuses on the idea that modern education should develop creativity, teamwork, and ethical intentions to train learners to work in a constantly evolving social and technological world. All these opinions have highlighted the increased realisation that successful education systems should embrace integrated models that can foster individual and social change.

2.2 Indian Philosophical Perspectives on Education

The concept of Indian education has always been about a holistic development of human beings based on ethical, cultural, and spiritual values. Classical Indian cultures were centred on the development of self-knowledge, moral discipline, and intellectual enquiry as the part of the educational process. Contemporary Indian philosophers like Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, and Sri Aurobindo formulated unique educational philosophies that attempted to unify the traditional Indian knowledge with modern educational ideals (Raina, 2018).

The educational philosophy of Tagore put emphasis on the freedom of learning, creativity and developing the aesthetic and cultural sensibility by having an experience with nature and arts. The idea of Nai Talim formulated by Gandhi emphasised the value of productive activity, moral training and the combination of manual and intellectual labour into the educational process. These philosophies criticised colonial conceptualizations of education, which focused on rote memorization and bureaucratic education with more learner-centred and culturally based approaches to education.

One of the most cohesive philosophies of holistic education was created by Sri Aurobindo, among this group of philosophers. The Integral Education as developed by him lays stress on the harmonious growth of physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual parts of the human personality (Aurobindo, 1990). Aurobindo believes that the process of education should help the consciousness develop and the learner realise his inner potential. The Aurobindo philosophy of education is suggested to predict numerous modern arguments of whole-person learning, learner-centeredness, and experience-driven learning (Raina, 2018). His thoughts have hence remained significant philosophical basis on rethinking the current educational systems.

2.3 Educational Policy Reform and NEP 2020

The world is witnessing the growth of educational policy reforms that focus more on interdisciplinary learning, learner-centred education and the acquisition of skills that are essential in the twenty first century. The educational system of the country should encourage creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, and moral consciousness among students, and it is emphasised in international policy frameworks established by organisations like the OECD and UNESCO (OECD, 2019; UNESCO, 2021). The international changes can be seen as larger-scale changes in knowledge economies and social systems that require more flexible and radical education models.

To conform to these global trends, the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) is a significant effort by the nation to reorganise the education system in the country. The policy presents a number of reforms in improving the quality, equity, and accessibility of education such as

multidisciplinary higher education, flexible curriculums, flexible approaches to learning, and encouragement of multilingual education (Government of India, 2020). It has been observed that NEP 2020 has become one of the first steps in breaking the usual rote patterns of education and moving to competence-centred learning that fosters creativity and problem solving skills (Tilak, 2021; Kumar, 2021).

The other unique characteristic of NEP 2020 is that it focuses on the integration of the Indian systems of knowledge into modern education. This programme demonstrates an increased academic concern in identifying indigenous and culturally embedded knowledge practises in contemporary educational systems (Battiste, 2014). The policy aims at forming a more culturally based and inclusionary educational system by including philosophical, scientific and cultural inputs of the intellectual tradition of India.

2.4 Conceptual Convergence between Integral Education and NEP 2020

Though NEP 2020 is more of a modern-day policy effort, some of their main principles echo some previous philosophical efforts in the field of Indian education. It is observed that the focus of the policy on whole-person development, practical learning, and interdisciplinary education captures the long-lasting ideas expressed by educational philosophers in India (Raina, 2018). The idea of Integral Education by Sri Aurobindo, especially, has a philosophical structure that would match the vision of the policy concerning the holistic and learner-centred approach to education.

The practical nature and intuitive learning principles, combined with an emphasis on morality and spirituality, predict the current trends in pedagogy based on reflective learning and personal change (Kolb, 2014). Equally, his support of the mother-tongue-based education appeals to the modern studies in educational linguistics that emphasise the value of language to cognitive development and formation of cultural identity (Cummins, 2000).

Regardless of these conceptual similarities, little literature has critically explored the philosophical connexion between the educational ideology of Aurobindo and the values that are embodied in NEP 2020. The current literature on NEP 2020 is more inclined towards analysis of the policy and the problems of its implementation, whereas the research of Aurobindo philosophy is usually limited to the historical or philosophical discourse. This, however, leaves a gap in academic research that can bring about the two fields together and how the classical Indian educational philosophy can influence the modern day educational policy.

The current research aims at filling this gap, through a comparative philosophical investigation of the Sri Aurobindo concept of Integral Education and the informative principles of NEP 2020, which will help in achieving a better insight into philosophical underpinnings of recent changes in education in India.

3. Research Gap and Contribution of the Study

Despite the accumulated literature on the philosophical roots of holistic education and the education philosophy of the key Indian philosophers, there has been comparatively little research investigating the conceptual directness of the philosophy of Integral Education that is

put forward by Sri Aurobindo as applied to the modern educational policy frameworks. Available literature on the educational philosophy of Aurobindo has more or less been devoted to the spiritual and philosophical aspects of the concept, and the importance of the latter in holistic human growth and value-based education (Raina, 2018). Although these researches point out the significance of Integral Education, in a wider context of the Indian educational thought, they seldom discuss its implications in the context of contemporary policy changes.

Likewise, there is a considerable amount of research discussing the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and especially its structural reforms, institutional changes, and the impact on the design of the curriculum and governance of higher education (Tilak, 2021; Kumar, 2021). The main topics of these studies are the issue of policy implementation, restructuring of institutions, and the encouragement of multidisciplinary education. Yet, the majority of these analyses are also policy-driven and lack appropriateness in addressing the deeper philosophical traditions which can either inform or enrich the guiding principles of the policy.

Although the ostensibly conceptual parallels between NEP 2020 and other Indian educational philosophies are clear, little scholarly research has been conducted linking the conceptual basis of the Sri Aurobindo Integral Education with the philosophical underpinnings of NEP 2020. Specifically, this is deficient of comparative philosophical analysis that critically explores how the Aurobindo model of education, its multidimensional system of physical, vital, mental, psychic, and spiritual development, can be used as a theoretic approach to explain the current educational reforms in India.

The given paper aims to fill this gap with the help of a comparative philosophical discussion of the Integral Education provided by Sri Aurobindo and the main educational principles in NEP 2020. The contribution of the study to the literature is three-fold with an integration of the knowledge of the classical Indian educational philosophy and modern education policy.

First, it offers a conceptual reinterpretation of NEP 2020 based on the philosophical perspective of Integral Education and how a number of principles used by the policy (including holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, experiential learning, multilingual education, and the harmonisation of Indian knowledge systems) echo ideas expressed by Sri Aurobindo over a hundred years ago.

Second, the research has a contribution to the area of philosophy of education as it helps prove that the indigenous philosophical traditions could remain relevant in the modern educational discourse. It thus connects the historical philosophical thought and the current educational policy.

Third, the research has policy implications because it proposes that incorporating the more profound ethical and humanistic concepts of the Integral Education might reinforce the normative basis of educational change in India. This integration can be useful in facilitating the realisation of the fact that the educational policies do not just lead to academic excellence as well as development of skills, but also enhance the overall aims and objectives of human flourishing, ethical responsibility, and social harmony.

The present interdisciplinary approach allows the study to help the current debate on how

philosophical traditions can guide the modern educational policy and practise, and this way contribute to a more holistic and culturally-reflective vision of the education.

4. Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives that guide the study:

1. To investigate the philosophical premises of the idea of Integral Education developed by Sri Aurobindo.
2. To examine the major educational values introduced in NEP 2020.
3. To investigate the philosophical parallels between the Aurobindo educational philosophy and NEP 2020.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The research presented in the present study is based on a qualitative philosophical research design that is based on textual and conceptual analysis. The application of philosophical inquiry in education is a common method of providing a critical analysis of educational concepts, policies, and theories through the interpretation of fundamental texts and placing them within a larger intellectual context (Biesta, 2015; Standish, 2007). This method is especially suitable in the cases where the aim is to investigate the conceptual connexions between classical philosophical ideas and the modern educational policy.

The paper relies on the approaches typical of the philosophical and qualitative studies of education such as interpretive textual analysis and conceptual comparison of themes. The qualitative methods can be particularly helpful to examine policy documents and philosophical writings as they allow a researcher to investigate the meanings, conceptual structures, and assumptions underlying educational discourse (Creswell and Poth, 2016; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Interpretive textual methods in policy analysis enable a researcher to explore the way educational concepts are expressed and incorporated into the policy frameworks (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009).

5.2 Sources of Data

The comparison is conducted with regards to two types of documentary sources, including primary philosophical sources and secondary policy and academic sources.

Primary Sources

The original philosophical writings of Sri Aurobindo are the main sources as they present the principles of the Integral Education. The main texts that will be used in this paper are:

- A System of National Education.
- The Synthesis of Yoga
- The Life Divine

They give the philosophical ground to the Aurobindo educational philosophy and explain his idea of the whole human development based on combining physical, vital, mental, psychic, and

spiritual aspects of education (Aurobindo, 1990).

Secondary Sources

The official policy document and academic literature are the secondary sources. These sources comprise:

- The Government of India National Education Policy 2020.
- Research in education philosophy, Indian educational philosophy and policy reforms.

Policy documentations are commonly known as important sources in qualitative policy studies since it is a typical portrayal of the normative aspirations, conceptual suppositions, and institutional wishful associations that drive educational reformations (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009). To place the analysis in the context of the current discussions of holistic education, interdisciplinary learning, and transformation of educational policy, the literature of the scholars was utilised.

5.3 Method of Analysis

The paper is based on a comparative philosophical analysis to explore the conceptual links between the educational philosophy formulated by Sri Aurobindo, and the postulates governing NEP 2020. Comparative philosophical analysis refers to the discovery of central conceptual themes in various theoretical perspectives and the process of identifying the similarities, differences, and implication between them in the context of contemporary educational discourse (Bray, Adamson, and Mason, 2014).

The analysis procedure was done in three steps:

1. Textual Interpretation The philosophical works of Sri Aurobindo and of the NEP 2020 policy document were scrutinised to extract important ideas on the topics of holistic education, experiential learning, multilingualism, and the assimilation of indigenous knowledge systems.
2. Thematic Categorization- Themes that came out of the reading materials were grouped into thematic categories which represented common educational principles.
3. Comparative Interpretation - The themes were related to the modern education theory and policy discourse to evaluate the degree to which the philosophical statement of the Integral Education converges with the NEP 2020 objectives.

This interpretive style can be used to better comprehend the ways in which classical educational philosophies can be used to shape national policy structures and educational reform efforts (Biesta, 2010). Placing the philosophy of Aurobindo in the context of the wider discussion of the contemporary educational policy, the given study will attempt to shed some light on the philosophical bases of the recent changes in education in India.

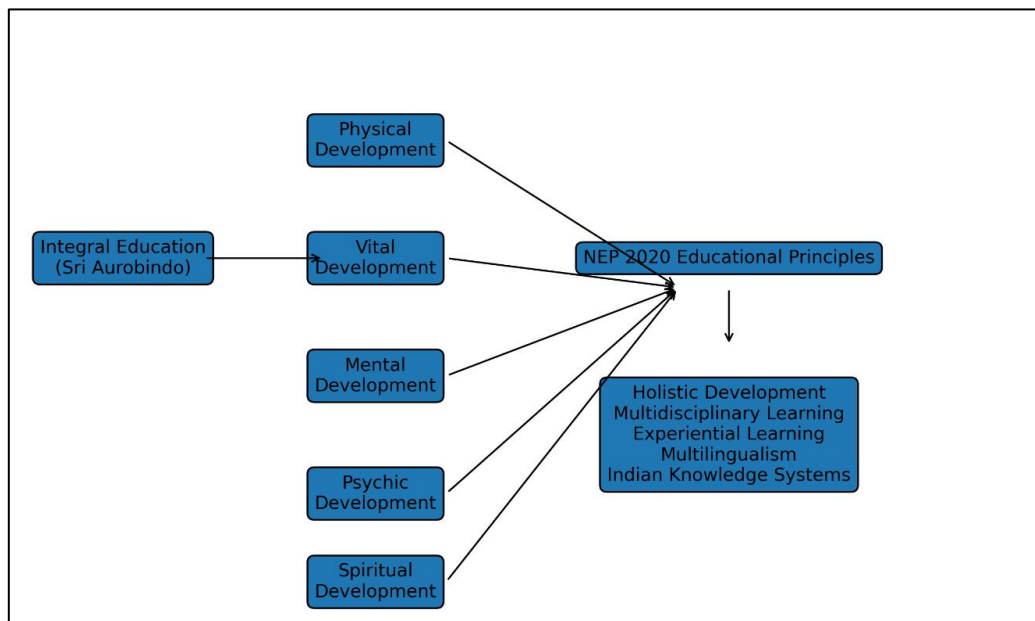
6. Conceptual Framework

The study conceptual framework shows how the idea of Integral Education by Sri Aurobindo is philosophically connected with the principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India. The educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo is founded on the harmonious evolution

of five dimensions of human personality including the physical, vital, mental, psychic and the spiritual (Aurobindo, 1990). All these dimensions are part of the holistic development of the human being and these dimensions form the philosophy of the learner-centred education.

According to the framework, these dimensions have been aligned with some of the major principles outlined in NEP 2020 such as holistic development, multidisciplinary learning, experiential education, multilingualism, and integrating the Indian knowledge systems (Government of India, 2020). Thus, the framework represents Aurobindo Integral Education as a philosophical backbone which supports the current policy vision of NEP 2020.

Figure-1, Conceptual Framework Relating to Sri Aurobindo's Integral Education to the Principles of NEP 2020



Explanation

The conceptual framework describes how the philosophy of Integral Education by Sri Aurobindo, which focuses on developing five aspects of human personality physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual, forms a philosophical basis to some of the principles highlighted in the National Education Policy 2020 in India. All these dimensions contribute to some of the educational results of the whole being of the individual, multidisciplinary, experiential, multilingual education, and the combination of Indian knowledge systems. The framework thus represents the educational philosophy of Aurobindo as a conceptual framework in which the modern policy vision of NEP 2020 can be viewed and reinforced.

7. Sri Aurobindo, Concept of Integral Education.

The philosophy of education of Sri Aurobindo is one of the most holistic educational principles worked out in the modern Indian intellectual thought. Based on his general metaphysical theory of Integral Yoga, Aurobindo developed the concept of education as a process of transformation whose purpose was not only the mastery of intellectual knowledge but the overall development of the human mind (Aurobindo, 1990). In this sense, education must develop the entire

spectrum of the human capacities, and that is, physical, emotional, intellectual, ethical, and spiritual and thus help people to attain personal fulfilment and social responsibility.

The key aspect of Aurobindo philosophy of education is the idea of Integral Education that aims at fostering the harmonious growth of five united aspects of human nature, namely the physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual aspects of the individual. The physical dimension is related to the development and discipline of the body, the vital dimension is connected with emotionality, energy, and the formation of the character, the mental dimension is associated with the intellectual development and the ability to think critically, the psychic dimension with the innermost part of the self or soul, which creates moral and spiritual consciousness, and the spiritual dimension is concerned with the higher consciousness and universal values (Aurobindo, 1990; Raina, 2018). It is a multidimensional educational model that is an expression of the holistic conceptualization of human development that does not just focus on the traditional educational paradigms that emphasise cognitive aspects.

Aurobindo claimed that education cannot focus on mechanical flow of information or training of people to be economically productive. Instead, the real purpose of education consists in the fact that it supports the process of the inner world development of the learner and it promotes the process of consciousness development. In this respect, he highlighted the fact that the task of education is to help the learner to discover his or her natural abilities and to lead him toward himself and harmony in society (Aurobindo, 1939). This kind of view is appealing to modern philosophical debates that theorise education as a subject formation and ethics growth approach instead of a process of learning skills only (Biesta, 2015).

The philosophy of Aurobindo also emphasises the value of freedom in education and the understanding of individuality of a learner. His argument on this was that education must be in line with the natural growth of the child and not force him to have strict rigid structures of teaching. In this model, teachers can no longer be considered as just knowledge transmitters but as facilitators that assist the learners to develop their intellectual and spiritual potentials (Aurobindo, 1923). This focus on learner agency and pedagogy of development foresees the contemporary child-centred learning theories that promote learner agency and constructivist ideas on knowledge constructions (Biesta, 2015; Dewey, 1986).

Aurobindo developed intuition, creativity, and imagination which is another significant element in the educational thought. He insisted on intellectual reasoning being insufficient to reflect the depth of human knowledge and that the process of education should also train intuitive and creativeness. This is a trend that fits modern educational literature that identifies creativity and critical thinking as key skills in decoding intricate and uncertain realities in the global environment (Fullan, 2007).

Moreover, Aurobindo stressed on the role of moral and spiritual values in education. The philosophy of Aurobindo places moral and spiritual development in the forefront of the educational practise unlike purely secular models of education, where cognitive achievement is central. In this opinion, education should be able to develop feeling of compassion, self-understanding, and a feeling of human unity as a whole. The notion of these ethical and spiritual aspects in the development of responsible citizenship and sustainable social progress has

gained more and more importance in the views of educational philosophers (Palmer et al., 2010).

The aspect of experiential learning is also a part of the central focus of the educational vision of Aurobindo. He felt that real knowledge can be developed through actual experience, contemplation and engagement with the world as opposed to memorization. Acquisition of knowledge must therefore be through observation, probing and practical use of real life situations. Such focus on experiential learning closely resembles contemporary theories of education that support inquiry-based and experiential pedagogies as an efficient way of facilitating profound knowledge and critical thinking (Kolb, 2014).

Collectively, the idea of Integral Education created by Sri Aurobindo provides a deep philosophical perspective on the comprehensive development of a human being. Combining physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of learning, his teaching doctrine pre-empted most modern controversies about whole person learning and learner-centred approaches to learning. As a result, the ideas of Aurobindo are very topical to the contemporary discussion about the reform of education, especially in the context that aims at the incorporation of cultural tradition and ethical values and interdisciplinary studies in the modern educational system.

8. Comparative Analysis of Integral Education and NEP 2020

The comparative study of the philosophy of Integral Education as put forth by Sri Aurobindo and the educational principles outlined in NEP 2020 demonstrates that there are a number of important conceptual points of intersection. Despite the differences in the historical backgrounds of the two frameworks, both of them are dedicated to the idea of a comprehensive human development, combination of knowledge on various disciplines, experiential learning, linguistic diversity, and cultural roots in education.

8.1 Holistic Development

The idea of integral human development that entails development of physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual aspects of human personality forms the basis of the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo (Aurobindo, 1990). Aurobindo argues that education ought to encourage the full personhood of an individual as opposed to intellectual attainment.

Equally, NEP 2020 encourages a balanced approach to education that will help educators develop cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical abilities in learners (Government of India, 2020). These holistic models are being more and more accepted by modern education research that holds that education must be able to constitute both moral judgement, ability to innovate, and a sense of social responsibility in addition to academic ability (Biesta, 2015).

8.2 Multidisciplinary Education

Sri Aurobindo promoted a comprehensive approach to knowledge that does not follow hard-disciplinary lines. He was convinced that education ought to bring about the synthesis of various types of knowledge and allow the learners to build up both analytical and intuitive knowledge (Aurobindo, 1923).

NEP 2020 is also one that favours multidisciplinary and flexible learning systems especially in

institutions of higher learning where learners are urged to venture into various areas of study and interdisciplinary learning pathways. These strategies are in line with the world trends in educational reforms that focus on the significance of integrated knowledge frameworks to tackle multifaceted challenges in society (Barnett, 2005; OECD, 2019).

8.3 Experiential Learning

Another key area of intersection between the philosophy of Aurobindo and NEP 2020 is experiential learning. Aurobindo also stressed that gaining knowledge through the use of observation, reflection, and personal experience of the real-life is much more authentic than using mechanical knowledge memorization (Aurobindo, 1923).

This view is much closer to the modern experiential learning theory, which focuses on learning based on action, reflection, and hands-on experience of the real-world contexts (Kolb, 2014). NEP 2020 includes this pedagogical strategy through the encouragement of project-based learning, inquiry learning, internship, and practise-based educational ways to encourage critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

8.4 Mother-Tongue Education

Aurobindo highly believed in mother tongue education and claimed that intellectual growth and cultural identity were mostly suppressed when learning in a foreign language. His view was that learning based on the native language of the learner helps in understanding knowledge better and also enhancing the bond between knowledge and cultural experience (Aurobindo, 1939).

This point of view is echoed by NEP 2020 that suggests using the mother tongue or regional language as the language of instruction in the primary level of education. This policy is supported by research carried on educational linguistics, which has shown that the mother-tongue-based education plays a significant positive role in supporting cognitive development and acquiring literacy skills (Cummins, 2000).

8.5 Indigenous Knowledge Systems

Sri Aurobindo noted that a national education system should be based on the cultural and philosophical tradition in the country, but be open to world knowledge. He claimed that education ought to re-unite students to the intellectual tradition of India so that they could attain a strong sense of cultural identity and moral obligation (Aurobindo, 1990).

NEP 2020 also facilitates incorporation of Indian Knowledge Systems in schools educational programmes as indigenous philosophies, sciences, arts, and cultural traditions are valued. Recent researchers point out that introducing the traditions of indigenous knowledge into the framework of modern education fosters the diversity of epistemics and culturally sensitive learning practises (Battiste, 2014).

On the whole, this comparative study shows that most of the fundamental educational values incorporated into NEP 2020 can be highly familiar with the philosophy of Integral Education developed by Sri Aurobindo. Although the policy model deals mainly with institutional change and governance in education, Aurobindo philosophy offers a more normative approach to the

comprehension of the overall humanistic aims of education.

Table-1, Analytical Comparison between Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Education and the Educational Principles of NEP 2020

Dimension of Integral Education	Description in Aurobindo’s Philosophy	Corresponding Principle in NEP 2020	Expected Educational Outcome
Physical Development	Development of the body through discipline, health, and physical education to create a balanced personality (Aurobindo, 1990).	Emphasis on sports, health education, and physical well-being in school curriculum.	Improved physical health, well-being, and balanced development of learners.
Vital Development	Development of emotions, character, motivation, and life-energy that shape personality and behavior.	Focus on socio-emotional learning, value education, and life skills.	Emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and responsible citizenship.
Mental Development	Intellectual growth involving critical thinking, reasoning, creativity, and imagination.	Multidisciplinary education, flexible curriculum, and critical thinking skills.	Cognitive development, creativity, and innovation.
Psychic Development	Development of inner consciousness, self-awareness, and moral understanding.	Ethical education, value-based learning, and character formation emphasized in NEP 2020.	Moral awareness, ethical decision-making, and self-reflection.
Spiritual Development	Realization of higher consciousness and universal human values guiding personal and social harmony.	Integration of Indian knowledge systems, cultural education, and ethical values.	Cultural awareness, social harmony, and responsible global citizenship.

Explanation

A conceptual comparison between the basic principles of the Sri Aurobindo Integral Education and the educational goals developed in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is provided in Table 1. The comparison shows that there are various aspects of the philosophical overlap between the two frameworks. Both schools of thought have a view on the relevance of the holistic development of the human being and they realise that education is not only cognitive but must also extend through emotional, ethical and social aspects of the human development.

Another similarity demonstrated in the table is the multidisciplinary focus of education where the vision of Aurobindo to have an integrated knowledge in different disciplines is parallel to the policy objective of NEP 2020, which focuses on having flexible and interdisciplinary education systems. Equally, both models give more emphasis to experiential learning by shunning memorization of knowledge by rote but rather active interaction with knowledge through observation, inquiry and reflection.

The role of language in the education process is another significant field of congruency. Another principle that is reflected in NEP 2020 is the use of the mother tongue, as the main language of instruction, which was advocated by Aurobindo and is promoted in the recommendation to apply mother-tongue-based education during the initial years of school. Moreover, the two frameworks appreciate the role of cultural and indigenous knowledge systems, as there is a need to re-link education with cultural and intellectual heritage of a nation.

In general, Table 1 shows that despite the fact that the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo was raised in a different historical setting, a great number of its main principles of education can be seen as similar to the modern-day policy vision expressed in NEP 2020.

Table 2. Mapping Sri Aurobindo’s Integral Education Dimensions with NEP 2020 Educational Outcomes

Dimension of Integral Education	Description in Aurobindo’s Philosophy	Corresponding Principle in NEP 2020	Expected Educational Outcome
Physical Development	Development of the body through discipline, health, and physical education to create a balanced personality (Aurobindo, 1990).	Emphasis on sports, health education, and physical well-being in school curriculum.	Improved physical health, well-being, and balanced development of learners.
Vital Development	Development of emotions, character, motivation, and life-energy that shape personality and	Focus on socio-emotional learning, value education, and life skills.	Emotional intelligence, self-regulation, and responsible citizenship.

	behavior.		
Mental Development	Intellectual growth involving critical thinking, reasoning, creativity, and imagination.	Multidisciplinary education, flexible curriculum, and critical thinking skills.	Cognitive development, creativity, and innovation.
Psychic Development	Development of inner consciousness, self-awareness, and moral understanding.	Ethical education, value-based learning, and character formation emphasized in NEP 2020.	Moral awareness, ethical decision-making, and self-reflection.
Spiritual Development	Realization of higher consciousness and universal human values guiding personal and social harmony.	Integration of Indian knowledge systems, cultural education, and ethical values.	Cultural awareness, social harmony, and responsible global citizenship.

Explanation

Table 2 gives a conceptual mapping of the five dimensions of Integral Education of Sri Aurobindo to the outcomes of education in the National Education Policy 2020. The table provides an example of the way the multidimensional model of human development that was suggested by Aurobindo can be used as the philosophical tool to comprehend the overall goals of the policy.

The physical development dimension, which focuses on health, discipline and body health is aligned with NEP 2020, which focuses on physical education, integration of sports and well being of students. On the same note, the concept of vital development, where emotional development, character development, and management of life energies are considered in the development of Aurobindo is also consistent with the socio-emotional learning and the emphasis on values education in the policy.

The mental development dimension aligns with the activity of NEP 2020 to facilitate critical thinking, creativity, and interdisciplinary learning using flexible curricula and competency-based education. In the meantime, the psychic aspect, which is linked to inner awareness and moral awareness, finds its echo in the fact that the policy emphasises the importance of moral values and character building.

Lastly, the spiritual aspect of the Integral Education that focuses on the achievement of universal human values and harmony is similar to the NEP 2020 focus on cultural awareness, Indian knowledge systems, and the development of responsible citizenship. This mapping

shows that the philosophical framework used by Aurobindo can offer a more substantial basis of normativity to the explanation of the broader educational objectives expressed in modern policy reforms. Table 2 illustrates this point.

9. Discussion

The comparative analysis shows that the educational vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India shares a great deal of philosophical overlap with the notion of Integral Education by Sri Aurobindo. Some of the main principles that the policy incorporates, such as the holistic development, the interdisciplinary learning, the experiential learning, and the acknowledgment of the cultural knowledge traditions, are reminiscent of the ideas that were formulated by Aurobindo at the beginning of the twentieth century. This convergence implies that the modern educational changes in India are more than administrative and structural changes but it is rather implicitly informed by deeper philosophical traditions of Indian educational thought.

The focus of holistic growth in NEP 2020 is very similar to the vision of Aurobindo education as holistic development of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual components of the human personality. Scholarship in modern education is becoming more and more aware of the shortcomings of significantly instrumental views of education that focus on the economic productivity or standardised measures of performance. Rather, researchers believe that education is supposed to develop wider human capabilities like moral reasoning, innovation, and critical thinking (Biesta, 2015). To this end, the holistic nature of learning under the policy is in line with global arguments that argue in favour of education that facilitates human prosperity and social accountability (Nussbaum, 2016).

On the same note, the focus of the policy on multidisciplinary education and the flexibility of curricular organisation echoes the current international reforms of the higher education system, which tend to de institutionalise the hard-line disciplinary barriers in higher education. Researchers in education are becoming more and more oriented towards using interdisciplinary knowledge structures to solve the complicated issues of the society that demand the contributions of different disciplines to the solution (Barnett, 2005; OECD, 2019). Sri Aurobindo had predicted such an integrative approach in his philosophy with its focus on the unity of knowledge and the necessity of learners to cultivate both analytical and intuitive forms of knowledge.

Although these two concepts have similarities, there seems to be a significant difference in the level of philosophical orientation between the educational thinking of Aurobindo and the policy framework of NEP 2020. Although the policy mainly aims at reforms in institutions, restructuring of the curriculum as well as governance, the philosophy of Aurobindo places education in a more metaphysical context that is more so concerned with the development of the mind and spiritual growth of an individual (Aurobindo, 1990). In the case of Aurobindo, education has an ultimate goal of allowing individuals to discover their inner potential and develop a more profound sense of human togetherness and morality.

This distinction underscores an even more general conflict in modern educational policy rhetoric between instrumental and humanistic understandings of education. The policy

frameworks tend to focus on quantifiable results like employability, innovation and economical growth, as compared to the philosophical traditions, which focus on education as a process of transformation of personal and moral growth (Biesta, 2015). Although NEP 2020 does include a number of humanistic principles, like holistic education and ethical values, it mostly considers them in the context of institutional reform and skill development, and not in a well-developed philosophical or spiritual framework.

The inclusion of the more profound philosophical perspectives of the Integral Education of Sri Aurobindo might hence add value to the normative principles of the modern Indian educational reforms. The focus of self-realisation, ethical self-understanding, and spiritual development is a more expanded view of what education is at Aurobindo, and it does not focus on strictly instrumental goals. Educational philosophers are increasingly adopting the view that humanistic approach to issues can give much-needed answers to the moral, ecological, and social challenges being experienced by modern societies (Palmer et al., 2010).

In this respect, the educational philosophy of Aurobindo suggests a very useful conceptual framework according to which the aims of NEP 2020 can be explained and reinforced. Considering the structural reforms suggested by the policy combined with the focus on the ethical, cultural, and spiritual aspects of education as suggested by the Integral Education, one can possibly come up with a more inclusive educational system that can foster intellectual and human prosperity. Such synthesis would not only improve the philosophical foundation of the reform of education in India, but also contribute to the global discussion of holistic and transformative education.

10. Conclusion and Implications for Educational Policy

In the current research, the philosophical interaction between a notion of Integral Education by Sri Aurobindo and the principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in India was discussed as a comparative philosophical analysis. Their results indicate that some of the underlying concepts of NEP 2020, including holistic education, multidisciplinary learning, experiential pedagogy, multilinguality, and regeneration of indigenous knowledge systems, are closer to the education philosophy expressed by Sri Aurobindo over a hundred years ago. Such convergence points to the fact that modern educational reform in India is not a totally new development but, in most ways, has its foundation in more ancient philosophies of Indian education.

The philosophy of Integral Education by Sri Aurobindo offers a detailed approach to interpreting the process of education as the process of wholesome development of human being incorporating physical, emotional, intellectual, ethical and spiritual aspects of learning (Aurobindo, 1990). His vision goes beyond the instrumental orientations that usually focus on the achievement of the modern education system and focuses on the development of a personal conscience, moral responsibility, creativity, and interpersonal harmony. Conversely, NEP 2020 acts mostly as a policy framework aimed at reorganising of institutions, education curricula, and governance mechanisms to improve access, equity, and education quality (Government of India, 2020). Though a number of humanistic principles are embedded in the policy, it is rather directed to structural reform and skill training needed to be included in the knowledge

economies of the modern age.

This comparative analysis thus indicates the intersectionality as well as complementary nature of the two frameworks. On the one hand, NEP 2020 is in many ways indicative of the pedagogical and philosophical concepts promoted by Aurobindo, specifically, in its focus on holistic growth, the interdisciplinary learning, and the experiential education. Conversely, the philosophy of Aurobindo offers a more extensive normative basis that places education in a wider moral and spiritual perspective of human evolution. Allowing these philosophical reflections to be incorporated into the modern discourse of policy-making might enhance the humanistic and ethical aspects of education reform.

Policy wise, there are a number of implications of this analysis. To start with, the educational reforms motivated by NEP 2020 might be enriched with the focus on the holistic development and value-oriented education, which will make the learning outcomes more focused on more than merely cognitive performance, including ethical logic, creativity, and emotional cognition. Modern educational theoreticians insist more on the necessity of such holistic approaches to the development of responsible citizenship and the solutions of global social and environmental issues (Biesta, 2015; UNESCO, 2021).

Second, multidisciplinary education and learning-by-doing, which are stressed in the philosophy of Aurobindo as well as NEP 2020, must be facilitated by institutional changes in order to promote adaptability of curricular structures, innovative methods of learning, and cooperative learning settings. The literature on higher education indicates that the interdisciplinary forms of learning can increase the capacity of students to solve complicated real-life issues and intellectual creativity (Barnett, 2005; OECD, 2019).

Third, the emphasis of the policy on Indian knowledge systems and multilingual education is a good chance to re-establish modern education with the rich intellectual and cultural heritage of India. The integration of the native philosophies, including the ones expressed by Sri Aurobindo, would help add to a more culturally based educational system that encourages both the national sense and the international interaction. Education policy scholars become more and more concerned with the necessity to introduce the indigenous and culturally embedded systems of knowledge into the modern education to stimulate the idea of epistemic diversity and inclusive learning conditions (Battiste, 2014).

Lastly, the research emphasises the necessity of the connexion between educational philosophy and policy-making. Although policy documents are generally more interested in administrative and structural changes, philosophical views have the key normative advice on what education is all about in terms of the larger goals and objectives of education. The interaction with philosophical traditions like Aurobindo and his Integral Education can thus be helpful in enriching modern policy discussions by preempting the ethical, cultural, and humanistic purposes of education.

Summing up, the Sri Aurobindo educational philosophy can be used as a useful conceptual model to revise and empower transformative goals of NEP 2020. Combining the philosophy of integral human development and modern educational reforms, one might come up with a more holistic and culturally-grounded educational system that would allow fostering intellectual

excellence and human prosperity. Further studies can also address the actual application of the Aurobindo educational concepts into modern institutions of learning and how such philosophical insights can be used in the current reformation of the Indian educational system.

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