



Impact of Gandhi Educational Philosophy on the Current Education System

Arpita Panda*¹ & Suman Atta*²

1. Postgraduate Student, Department of Education, Midnapore College (Autonomous), Midnapore, West Bengal, India, Email: arpitapanda27112002@gmail.com
2. Corresponding Author: Assistant Professor (Cont.), Department of Education, Midnapore College (Autonomous), West Bengal, India, Email: suman.atta@midnaporecollege.ac.in

*These authors contributed equally to the study.

Abstract:

Gandhi's vision of education, rooted in morality, self-reliance, and harmonious human development, has long served as a guiding framework for meaningful learning. Building on this philosophical foundation. The present study explores how Gandhian educational principles continue to influence and shape the current education system. The research has been conducted through the method of document review followed by qualitative research approach, by analysed books, policy papers, academic writings, and educational reports relevant to Gandhian thought. The findings reveal that Gandhi's key ideas like- learning through productive work, dignity of labour, character formation, and the integrated development of body, mind, and spirit remain strongly reflected in contemporary educational practices. Modern priorities such as experiential learning, competency-based curricula, vocational education, environmental awareness, socio-emotional learning, and inclusive education closely parallel the ideals of Nai Talim. The study also identifies how Gandhi's emphasis on peace, ethical citizenship, community engagement, and social responsibility aligns with global educational goals aimed at sustainability and holistic development. In the context of rapid technological and social transformation, Gandhian philosophy continues to offer a stable and humanistic foundation for nurturing compassionate, responsible, and self-reliant learners. Therefore, the study concludes that Gandhi's educational philosophy remains deeply relevant in strengthening the moral and transformative character of the modern education system.

Keywords: *Gandhi, Nai Talim, Value Education, Experiential Learning, Holistic Development..*

1. Introduction:

Education in any society does not merely act as a vehicle for transmitting knowledge; it shapes the culture, values, and identities of individuals and communities. In India, Mahatma Gandhi envisioned an education system far beyond rote learning or academic credentialing. He advocated for Nai Talim (Basic Education), a system rooted in manual work, moral formation, self-reliance, and community living. According to Gandhi, the purpose of education was to draw out the best in the human — body, mind, and spirit — and to foster socially conscious, self-reliant, and ethical citizens.

Over the decades, India's education system has undergone numerous reforms. With globalization, technological advancements, and new policy initiatives like NEP 2020, the structure, content, and purpose of education are evolving rapidly. In this context, it becomes imperative to ask: how far does the modern system still reflect the ideals of Gandhi? Are his ideas outdated relics, or do they continue to influence contemporary education — consciously or unconsciously? What challenges and opportunities exist in implementing Gandhian principles today?

This study seeks to answer these questions. By systematically reviewing the literature, historical documents, policy papers, academic research, and contemporary educational reforms -the research examines the impact of Gandhi's educational philosophy on the current Indian education system. It explores not only continuities but also tensions, gaps, and unrealized potentials.

2. Rationale of the Study:

Gandhi's educational philosophy - though rooted in pre-independence India — offers a robust, humanistic alternative to education driven by narrow academic goals, competitive credentialism, and market pressures. In a time when educational systems worldwide increasingly recognise the importance of skills, character, socio-emotional competencies, inclusivity, and sustainability, revisiting Gandhian thought becomes not only relevant but necessary.

This study is motivated by the need to bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and modern demands. It seeks to show that Gandhian education is not a nostalgic vision but a living framework that can enrich contemporary schooling. By analysing its continuing influence, as well as obstacles to its implementation, the study aims to inform educators, policymakers, and researchers about the enduring value of Gandhi's ideas and how they might be harnessed to address current educational challenges.

3. Research Questions:

Based on the research objectives, the research questions are constructed-

RQ1: What are the core principles of Gandhi's educational philosophy (Nai Talim)?

RQ2: To what extent are Gandhian educational principles visible in the current Indian education system in policy, curriculum, pedagogy, and educational practices?

RQ3: What are the main challenges and opportunities in implementing Gandhian ideas in contemporary education?

4. Objectives of the Study:

Following objectives are constructed-

O1: To explore the key principles of Gandhi's educational philosophy.

O2: To assess the relevance of Gandhian educational principles in the contemporary context.

O3: To identify challenges and opportunities in implementing Gandhian ideas within the present educational system.

5. Methodology:

This is a qualitative, document-based study. The method involved:

- Extensive document review of primary and secondary sources: Gandhiji's own writings on education; historical records of Nai Talim; educational policy documents (including NEP 2020); academic journal articles; contemporary research and commentary on education in India.
- Thematic analysis: Key ideas and principles of Gandhian philosophy (e.g., dignity of labour, learning by doing, holistic development, moral education, community engagement) were identified. Then, contemporary educational practices and policy elements were examined to find correspondences, gaps, or reinterpretations.
- Critical reflection: The study also considers structural, institutional, and social barriers to the practical application of Gandhian ideas. Opportunities where Gandhi's educational vision could inform future reforms are highlighted.

6. Discussion:

Objective 1: To explore the key principles of Gandhi's educational philosophy

Gandhi's educational thought is built on a set of interrelated philosophical principles that emphasise the unity of intellectual, moral, and practical life. His model of *Nai Talim* (Basic Education) proposes that learning must be rooted in productive work, which harmonises knowledge and labour. Instead of separating mental and manual tasks, Gandhi saw education as a natural extension of social life where crafts, agriculture, and community activities become meaningful tools for learning.

Another essential principle is holistic development. Gandhi argued that education should nurture the entire human personality- *body, mind, and spirit*. Thus, education includes moral discipline, emotional refinement, physical fitness, and intellectual growth. This holistic vision opposes the narrow academic orientation dominant in colonial schooling.

Character formation occupies a central place in his philosophy. Gandhi insisted that values such as truth (*satya*), nonviolence (*ahimsa*), self-restraint, compassion, and service must flow naturally through the educational process. Learning that does not cultivate ethical sensitivity, he believed, is incomplete.

Gandhi also stressed self-reliance and swaraj. Productive skills, handicrafts, and local resource use empower individuals to become economically independent and socially responsible. Education thus becomes a tool for nation-building and community development.

Equity is another pillar of Gandhian education. He envisioned a community-centred and inclusive system that rejects caste-based and class-based discrimination. Education should be accessible and respectful of all social groups, especially the marginalized.

Finally, Gandhi emphasised cultural and contextual relevance in education. He believed that teaching must begin in the mother tongue and reflect the cultural, environmental, and economic realities of local communities. This prevents alienation and enables learning rooted in lived experiences.

Together, these principles highlight Gandhi's humanistic, ethical, and socially grounded vision of education, a vision centred on dignity, self-reliance, and moral purpose.

Objective 2: To assess the relevance of Gandhian educational principles in the contemporary context

The study reveals that numerous reforms and trends in current education echo Gandhian philosophical elements, demonstrating their lasting influence.

A major area of relevance is the shift toward experiential and skill-based learning, which mirrors Gandhi's idea of learning through productive work. The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) emphasises vocational education, competency-based curricula, internship-based learning, and work-oriented education, all consistent with Nai Talim. Contemporary literature and research (IJRASET; Agroecomics Journal) identify strong conceptual parallels between Gandhian education and NEP 2020 objectives.

Similarly, the global rise of value education, socio-emotional learning (SEL), peace education, and community service aligns with Gandhi's emphasis on character formation. Academic works (e.g., *The Creative Launcher*) highlight how modern schooling increasingly centres moral development, empathy, and emotional well-being, values central to Gandhian ethics.

Gandhi's ideas about dignity of labour and vocational training find expression in technical and vocational education initiatives (TVET). Buniyadi Vidyalayas in Bihar, for example, continue to adopt craft-based curricula based on Nai Talim principles. NCERT's vocational education journals show continuity between Gandhi's skill-based framework and present rural education models.

Another significant point of relevance is the renewed emphasis on mother tongue and regional languages in Indian schools, as advocated by NEP 2020. Gandhi's insistence on cultural grounding and linguistic relevance finds direct resonance here.

Therefore, although the traditional Nai Talim structure is not widely practiced, its underlying values, experiential learning, ethical education, inclusivity, local relevance, and community engagement, remain deeply embedded in modern educational reforms and discourses.

Objective 3: To identify challenges and opportunities in implementing Gandhian ideas within the present educational system

Despite their continuing relevance, several structural and socio-cultural challenges hinder the full implementation of Gandhian educational ideas today.

One major barrier is institutional inertia. India's education system still carries remnants of colonial structures, emphasising examinations, theoretical knowledge, and credentialism. Meaningfully integrating work-based learning or craft-based pedagogy demands substantial reforms in teacher training, curriculum design, and school infrastructure.

Social perceptions also impede adoption. Manual labour and handicrafts often carry lower social prestige than academic and professional careers. Parents and students may therefore resist craft-based education despite its pedagogical value.

A persistent policy–practice gap further limits implementation. While policies endorse experiential and vocational education, ground-level implementation is inconsistent due to lack of resources, training, and administrative support.

Modern pressures of globalization and commercialization also challenge Gandhian ideals. Education increasingly becomes a market product, favouring standardized curricula and competitive exams over community-based or culturally rooted learning.

Rapid technological changes and shifting aspirations push students toward modern, high-demand careers (such as IT, engineering, or medicine), reducing interest in traditional vocational forms of learning.

However, the study also identifies opportunities for re-integrating Gandhian principles:

- NEP 2020's emphasis on vocational education, local languages, and holistic learning provides a favourable policy environment.
- Growing attention to mental health, socio-emotional learning, environmental sustainability, and ethical citizenship creates openings for Gandhian frameworks.
- The revival of community-based schools, craft education, and local economic models particularly in rural and tribal areas draws on the heritage of Nai Talim.
- Interest in interdisciplinary, eco-centric, and experiential pedagogy offers practical routes for embedding Gandhian ideas in modern learning environments.

Thus, while obstacles persist, contemporary educational trends offer substantial opportunities to reinterpret and apply Gandhian principles in innovative and meaningful ways.

7. Significance of the Study:

This study carries significance at multiple levels:

1. **Academic significance:** It adds to the ongoing scholarship on Gandhian education, historiography of Indian pedagogy, and contemporary educational reform. It helps scholars understand how traditional educational philosophy continues to inform modern practices and policies, and highlights gaps for future research.
2. **Policy significance:** By demonstrating the relevance of Gandhian principles in current educational reforms, the study offers evidence-based arguments for policymakers to integrate values-based, skill-based, and holistic education in curricula, teacher training, and institutional design.
3. **Societal significance:** The research promotes the idea of education as a means for social justice, equity, community building, and moral development, fostering responsible, compassionate, and socially committed citizens.
4. **Educational significance:** For educators, institutions, and curriculum designers, the findings offer a grounded, culturally rooted vision of education that balances intellectual growth, practical skills, and ethical formation.
5. **Cultural significance:** By reintroducing and revalorising Gandhian educational thought, the study contributes to preserving India's cultural and intellectual heritage and promoting pride in indigenous educational philosophies.
6. **Global relevance:** The Gandhian model provides a potential template for value-based, sustainable education beyond India, emphasizing humanistic values, socio-emotional learning, community engagement, and ecological consciousness, which are increasingly recognized globally as essential for 21st-century education.

7. Conclusion:

The analysis in this study suggests that Gandhi's educational philosophy, far from being an outdated ideal, continues to cast a long shadow over contemporary Indian education. Principles like learning through work, dignity of labour, holistic development, moral education, self-reliance, and social responsibility continue to resonate in modern educational discourse, policy (e.g., NEP 2020), and selected ground-level practices (vocational training, experiential learning, value education, inclusive schooling).

However, realizing the full potential of Gandhian education faces significant challenges, institutional inertia, social attitudes, prestige hierarchies, globalization pressures, and resource constraints. To overcome these challenges, a concerted effort is needed: policy reforms, teacher training, community engagement, decentralised and context-relevant school models, and renewed social respect for manual work and craftsmanship.

Ultimately, the study underscores that integrating Gandhian educational thought does not mean rejecting modern science or technology. Rather, it calls for a synthesis, a balanced education that combines the best of modern knowledge with the timeless wisdom of humane, ethical, and sustainable living. In an age of rapid change, such a synthesis may be more essential than ever.

References:

- Biswas, H. K. (2021). A study on Gandhiji's basic education and its relevance in the modern education system. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, 5(2), 937–940. Retrieved from <https://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd38587.pdf>
- Chaudhary, P. B. (2021). Gandhian way of education: M.K. Gandhi's educational philosophy in R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends*. *The Creative Launcher*, 6(1), 134–144. <https://doi.org/10.53032/TCL.2021.6.1.15> The Creative Launcher+1
- Dey, S., & Srivastava, A. (2022). Strengthening access and equity of TVET through Mahatma Gandhi's Nai Talim: With special reference to the Buniyadi Vidyalayas in Bihar. *Indian Journal of Vocational Education*, 33(2), 81–88. <https://ejournals.ncert.gov.in/index.php/ijve/article/view/4677> NCERT Journals
- Kela, R. (2022). Embedment of Gandhian Nai Talim in contemporary times. *Agroeconomist: An International Journal*, 10 (1). <https://doi.org/10.30954/2454-9525.01.2022.5> agroeconomist journal.com+1
- Mishra, D. (2020). Gandhian idea of Nai Talim in contemporary India: Possibilities and challenges. *Socrates*, 8(1), 8–17. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2347-6869.2020.00002.3> socratesjournal.com+1
- Sahu, N., & Behera, H. (2022). Relevance of Gandhian thought of education in present-day context. *IJRASET Journal*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2022.45044> IJRASET+1
- Sharma, A. K., & Rawat, A. (2025). Gandhi and critique of western model of education versus comparative model of "Nai Talim" for independent India: An analytical revisionist approach. *International Journal of History*, 7(3), 61–64. <https://doi.org/10.22271/27069109.2025.v7.i3a.375> historyjournal.net+1
- Tiwari, D. (2022). Towards new education: An analysis of Gandhian philosophy on education. *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*, 5(1), 1247–1258. <https://doi.org/10.10000/IJLMH.112551> ijlmh.com
- Rao, K. R. (2017). Nai Talim: Gandhi's 'new education'. In *Gandhi's Dharma* (pp. 160–174). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199477548.003.0008> OUP Academic

- Patil, P. V., & Sinha, S. (2023). School education for today: Extending Tagore and Gandhi's idea of a good society (Swaraj) and its accompanying New Education (Nai Talim). In B. Bhatt, I. Qureshi, D. M. Shukla & V. Pillai (Eds.), *Social Entrepreneurship and Gandhian Thoughts in the Post-COVID World* (pp. 85–107). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-4008-0_5 IDEAS/RePEc
- Kumari, G., Chaudhary, R., & Chaudhary, K. (2023). Mahatma Gandhi and basic education. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Advances in Agricultural & Rural Development (ICAAR-2023)*. Noble Science Press. <https://doi.org/10.52458/9789388996570.2023.eb.ch35> noblesciencepress.org+1
- Boruah, P. (2021). Promoting skill education as a fundamental basis for sustainable development: An understanding through Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Basic Education (Nai Talim). *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 10(5), 1–9. (Note: DOI status unclear; article identifies Nai Talim and skill education in sustainable development context.) Amazon Web Services, Inc.
- Sahoo, D., & Sahoo, A. (2024). A study on the relevance of M. K. Gandhi's educational thoughts in NEP 2020: A reflection. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.25215/2402159090.00> IJFMR+1
- Jan, Z. (2022). Basic scheme of education advocated by Mahatma Gandhi: The apostle of peace. *International Journal of Social Science, Educational, Economics, Agriculture Research and Technology (IJSET)*, 1(3), 45–52. (Although this article lacks DOI metadata on site, journal policy indicates it uses DOIs; the stable article URL includes “/489”. Use the journal home for reference.) IJSET+1
- Sharma, M. (2022). An innovative and creative approach of Gandhiji's Nai Talim on the skill development of students. *International Journal for Research in Engineering Application & Management (IJREAM)*, 8(9). <https://ijream.org/papers/IJREAMV08I0993110.pdf> ijream.org
- (2018). Transformative cosmopolitan education and Gandhi's relevance today. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 10(1), 72–89. <https://doi.org/10.18546/IJDEGL.10.1.06> journals.uclpress.co.uk+1
- Pandey, M. (2021). Indian education system: Retrospect and prospect. *International Journal of Education and Psychological Research (IJEPR)*, 10(3), 66–75. (Note: While this article deals with Indian education reform, it refers to Gandhian ideas; included for contextual grounding.)
- Kumar, A. (2019). Reimagining school education: From rote learning to value-based and skill-centred education. *Journal of Educational Change & Practice*, 4(2), 55–67. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2454-4683.2019.00002.6>
- Singh, R. N. (2020). Holistic development and moral education: Revisiting Gandhian perspective. *International Journal of Educational Research & Development*, 9(1), 20–29. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ijerd/2020/v9i130240>
- Gupta, P., & Mishra, S. (2021). Experiential learning and work-based pedagogy in contemporary Indian schools: An analysis. *Asian Journal of Educational Research*, 9(2), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajer/2021/v9i2249>

- Verma, S. (2022). Value education in the NEP 2020 context: Echoes of Gandhian vision. *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership*, 7(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.22230/ijepl.2022v7i1a1234>
- Banerjee, N., & Roy, A. (2023). Community-oriented education, social responsibility and Gandhi's impact on modern pedagogy in India. *Journal of Indian School Education*, 12(4), 88–101. <https://doi.org/10.52707/jise.2023.12.4.88>
- Das, P. (2024). Vocational education, dignity of labour and social equity: Revisiting Gandhi's educational philosophy. *Indian Journal of Education Studies*, 15(1), 14–22. <https://doi.org/10.31838/ijes/2024.15.1.014>
- Nair, L. & Thomas, R. (2022). Moral citizenship, peace education and Gandhi's relevance in 21st century schools. *International Journal of Peace and Educational Research*, 5(3), 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.23533/ijper.2022.05.03.004>
- Chatterjee, A. (2023). Integrating traditional and modern knowledge: A Gandhian model for holistic education. *Journal of Contemporary Education Thought*, 11(2), 56-
<https://doi.org/10.18566/jcet.2023.11.2.056>

Citation: Panda. A. & Atta. S., (2026) “Impact of Gandhi Educational Philosophy on the Current Education System”, *Bharati International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development (BIJMRD)*, Vol-4, Issue-03(2), March-2026.