**Bridging Cultures: Tagore’s Educational Thoughts on Global Citizenship Education**

**Abstract**

*A pioneer in the field of holistic development education, Rabindranath Tagore advocated for a curriculum that stressed cultural diversity, a deep connection to nature, and the development of students’ intellectual, moral, and emotional capacities. His method stressed that one needed to be resilient, empathetic, self-reliant and open minded to be great as an individual and society. At schools like Shantiniketan and Visva-Bharati, Tagore emphasised teaching methods where practical experience, cross-cultural understanding and an integrated curriculum formed integral part of it. At a time when our world is facing so many complicated problems, Tagore’s ideals of international understanding and constructive dialogue are more important than ever. His call for people to rise beyond their cultural and societal differences and work together is more important than ever in today’s increasingly globalised society. The purpose of this research is to address a range of global challenges by investigating Tagore’s educational concepts, their relevance to modern education, and their impacts on global citizenship.*

**Keywords:** Rabindranath Tagore, Global Citizenship Education, Global Issues, Cultural Diversity

**Introduction**

*“The highest education is that which does not merely gives us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.”(Rabindranath Tagore).*

When the Bengal Renaissance was taking place in the nineteenth century, Rabindranath Tagore played a key role in improving culture and society (Dar, 2021). For him, the goal of education was to help each person grow completely into who they are and enable them to participate in making their community better (Gordon, 2021). Tagore’s writings dealt with topics of universal community and the chains of spirituality. In Tagore’s opinion, education was important not only for people’s growth, but also for all the work happening in his community and neighbourhood. To achieve global awareness, friendliness, helpfulness, personal and spiritual improvement and an active mind, Tagore expected that Indian boys and girls would grow to be strong, free, open-minded, self-sufficient and deeply attached to India (Tirath, 2017). In his notion of education, Tagore described the perfect setting, school, teacher and approach for learning. He thought education should always be part of the community. Tagore believed the values of respect, understanding and having concern and compassion for others were all qualities necessary for being a global citizen (Hogan, 2012). UNESCO defines Global citizenship education as ‘educating individuals to become global citizens who coexist together on a single planet’ in its Sustainable Development Goal 4 target 7 (The Global Goals, 2024). One of the main elements of Tagore’s philosophy was universalism and connections among people, while he additionally valued a balance in everyone’s well-being (Banga, 2023). As Tagore wrote in several places, understanding and kindness towards others are important in the classroom to help students fit into their world. Tagore focused on diversity in culture and the unity of humanity for his ideas on global citizenship and peace (Chowdhury, 2023). With the world now connected like never before, Tagore’s thoughts on teaching of global citizenship education are very important.

**Objectives**

1. To study the educational ideas of Tagore.
2. To know Tagore’s thought on global citizenship education.
3. To analyse the relevance of Tagore’s educational ideas in modern world.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the educational ideas of Tagore?
2. What is Tagore’s thought on global citizenship education?
3. What is the relevancy of Tagore’s thought on global citizenship education?

**Methodology**

The study was carried out using secondary data derived from different research articles, books, websites etc. The study used document analysis approach as research method.

**Tagore’s Educational Philosophy**

Rabindranath Tagore played a key role in designing an educational system that builds on all-round growth, nature-based approaches, appreciation of diversity, developing an individual’s willpower and expression and giving back locally and globally (Dar, 2021). As stated by O’Connell (2020), Tagore believed that children absorbed new information better if teachers relied on elements in their daily routines. Having a flexible classroom is better for learning. In addition to learning how to think, he wanted students to focus on developing their creativity, sense of morals and emotions at school. Tagore based the school in Shantiniketan, surrounded by nature, so that the pupils could learn through hands-on experience. As years went on, Rabindranath Tagore started to think differently about education. These theories centred around naturalism, nationalism and internationalism. He hoped his education would value freedom, creativity and learning by working through problems. His ideas were influenced by traditional Indian culture as well as modern progressive beliefs. Tagore supported India’s culture, languages and ideals and wanted to keep native knowledge and moral beliefs alive. The learning he took in eventually created a universal humanism that grew past any one country. He founded Visva-Bharati University in 1921 to bring people from around the world together so they could learn from each other (Sen, A. P. (2023). Tagore was the first to advocate Global Citizenship Education and felt that people should understand how important interdependence is. Because he saw the meaning of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as spiritual and ethical, he believed “the world is one family.”

Here are some important aspects of his educational thoughts:

Holistic Education: According to Tagore, education involves more than simply passing along facts and numbers. Besides promoting academic learning, he encouraged an education that focused on students’ spiritual and ethical needs. According to Tagore, education should help a person become independent in their mental processes and ways of expressing ideas.

Integration with Nature: Rabindranath Tagore based his educational method on incorporating nature into teaching activities. The students who attended Tagore’s school shared a close bond with nature. This close connexion with nature encouraged the children to appreciate nature and consider today’s global challenges.

Cultural Inclusion and Diversity: Tagore believed that bringing together different cultures could be beneficial for everyone. Visva-Bharati invited students and professors from all over the globe to promote the exchange of cultures and ideas. This aspect explains that within his viewpoint, the GCED focuses especially on people being tolerant and understanding across cultures (Sarkar & Barman, 2023).

Freedom and Creativity: Tagore thought that allowing the mind to investigate and speak freely in a learning environment helped people become more creative. Such independence is valuable in global citizenship because it helps students improve their problem-solving skills and creative thinking (Pramanik, 2019).

Emphasis on Human Values: In his views on education, Tagore stressed the need for empathy, harmony and unity among people. He felt that education should allow students to accomplish their goals and understand the importance of caring for others (Kupfer, 2020).

**Conceptualizing Tagore’s Global Citizenship Thought**

Amid the rise of nationalism, Tagore emphasised the need for a united humanity and paid special attention to worldwide issues (Fraser, 2017), (Bhusan et al., 2015). According to Tagore, the leading schools of his time fostered a limited type of nationalism that kept students from being open-minded and discovering different cultures, as they would “stop being capable of sympathising with ideas outside theirs” (Leviste et al., 2023), (Kupfer, 2020). Tagore believed that for globalisation to work, children should respect their own culture as well as realise that people everywhere are equal (Sen, 2001). Tagore viewed education as connected to one’s surroundings and interacting with citizens from other countries (O’Connell, 2011). Tagore thought that it took interactions with different people to foster tolerance and understanding worldwide. Tagore encouraged people of different cultures and religions to understand and respect one another daily by bringing trainers and students from different nations to his university and school. He believed that hospitality was the greatest way to encourage and teach peace (Banga, 2023). In contrast to other places, visitors are treated with hospitality and everyone helps ensure they are looked after. Tagore believed that an ‘atmosphere of love’ in his students could free them from feelings of racial prejudice (Kupfer, 2016). Visva-Bharati University which simply means “World-India”, aims to connect with the world and to build a connexion with its country of origin, India.

**Tagore’s Experiment with Education – Visva Bharati**

In his 1918 book “The Centre of Indian Culture”, Tagore conveys his idea for a university that would be the centre of Indian culture. Before it grew to cover the wider world, Tagore’s school was connected to all of Asia. Tagore’s institution officially opened to the public in 1922 (Dasgupta, 2010). The name of the organization, Visva-Bharati, and its slogan, “Yatra Visvam Bhavati Ekanidam”, which means “Where the whole world meets in one nest”, are meant to show the connection between India and the rest of the world (Visva Bharati).

The school’s main idea is that everyone is part of the larger family and that it’s up to each person to help to form the bonds of friendship and understanding more potent between them and their communities. Visva Bharati promotes Global Citizenship Education (GCED) in a variety of contexts such as the classroom, through a variety of activities such as multidisciplinary curricula, community service projects, cultural exchange programs, and international partnerships (Chowdhury, 2023).

The university’s seminar, workshop, and conference series are also meant to stress how important global citizenship is. Visva Bharati has a number of Bhavanas (institutes) to study international cultures, including Nippon Bhavana, which promotes Indo-Japanese relations; the Centre for Modern European Languages, Literatures, and Culture Studies; Cheena Bhavana, which teaches Chinese language and culture; and the newly opened Bangladesh Bhavana. The way Visva Bharati has influenced its students and graduates has impacted their commitment to being socially responsible, protecting the environment, and being aware of other cultures. After obtaining the necessary skills, many people have gone on to make a contribution in the world through work in education, development, and diplomacy. There are still problems that need to be solved if GCED is going to be part of the larger educational system and be able to adapt to changing social, economic, and political conditions.

Shantiniketan teaches both traditional subjects and art, culture and nature. Kala Bhavana, an Institute of Fine Arts and Sangeet Bhavana, a Music and Dance, continue to have a long-lasting global impact. The festivals like Poush Mela, Vasanta Utsav and Rabindra Jayanti aim to promote cultural understanding. The way Tagore encouraged international educational collaboration is still followed and encouraged today.

**Tagore’s Educational Pedagogy and Practices**

Tagore’s way of teaching helps students become global citizens because his methods fit well with the objectives and themes of Global Citizenship Education (GCED). We are exploring how Tagore’s approach to education was much like what GCED aims to achieve.

*Respecting and understanding different cultures:* Tagore’s message regarding cultural variety was that we should all appreciate each other's ways of life and customs. Students at Shantiniketan could talk to teachers and students from all around the world. This helped students understand about a lot of different cultural conventions (Sarkar & Barman, 2023). It helps individuals learn about and value other cultures, which are two crucial parts of GCED.

*Integrated Pedagogy*: Tagore developed an integrated curriculum at Shantiniketan that covered traditional academic subjects as well as the arts, music, and environmental studies. This made students keen to learn in multiple fields of study. There are many important topics that global citizenship education (GCED) teaches, such as protecting the environment, promoting peace, and fighting for social justice. This cross-disciplinary approach has helped students observe things from many different angles by offering them additional information about a variety of areas (O'Connell, 2011).

*Community and Collaborative Learning:* Tagore realized how important it was for a group of learners to work together and learn from one other. Everyone in Shantiniketan, from students to professors, was part of a community that worked together and helped each other reach the same goal: learning. The students learnt from each other and improved their social and interpersonal abilities by working on projects and activities together (Narayanan and Menon, 2024).

*Experiential Learning:* Tagore thought doing things was a better way to learn than just memorizing them or listening to lectures. Students learnt by doing helpful activities such as exploring outside and performing art. According to Tagore, learning via experience helps people comprehend and appreciate the world around them and get more involved (Lesar, 2015).

**Implications for Contemporary Education:**

In today’s interconnected world, the concepts of global citizenship education are more relevant than they have ever been. Tagore’s concept of education is an ideal beginning point for the cultivation of global citizens who are capable of making the world a better place. The following is an explanation of how his thoughts correspond to the requirements that the school is currently facing.

*Concerns on a Global Scale*: The world is dealing with problems like climate change, pandemics, and extreme inequality. It’s important that our schools teach children to think globally and act locally. Tagore stressed the importance of a holistic, nature-based, and culturally inclusive education to assist students get through these problems.

*Cultural Competence*: More people are moving around and connecting digitally, which leads to cultural exchanges every day. Tagore’s idea of promoting cultural diversity and exchange in schools is important so that students can learn about other cultures and be able to do well in all sorts of situations.

*Educational Equity and Inclusion*: Tagore’s ideas about inclusive education and educational freedom have had an impact on educational equity. His ideas support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for inclusive education by pushing for a school system that gives all pupils the same opportunities, no matter of their cultural and socioeconomical backgrounds.

*Moral and Ethical Education:* In today’s world, people need to be both knowledgeable and morally sound because of the complicated social, economic, and moral problems we face. Tagore’s emphasis on the moral and ethical aspects of education is important for developing a sense of global ethics and responsibility.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Rabindranath Tagore’s educational thought emphasized the accomplishment of complete human-being, fostering peoples’ abilities to their utmost potential for personal perfection and the enhancement of the society in which they were brought up. Tagore believed that education must encompass the entirety of the physical and social environment, promoting fearlessness, independence, open-mindedness, self-reliance, and a spirit of inquiry and self-critique. Tagore's notion of ideal education included the characterization of the optimal environment, institution, educator, and methodology. He believed that a nation’s education takes form and substance solely within its broader context, emphasizing the significance of an effective connection between education and society. Tagore underscored the relevance of social responsibility, empathy, and compassion as essential traits of global citizenship, underscoring the interconnection of all living forms and the importance of cultivating mutual understanding and respect. In a time characterized by globalization and cultural diversity, Tagore’s perspectives on global citizenship education are increasingly pertinent. His educational concept prioritizes holistic development, nature-centred learning, individual freedom and expression, diversity and inclusiveness, and community and global service.

Tagore’s educational methods and practices are very pertinent to fostering a sense of global citizenship among students, as they closely coincide with the principles and objectives of Global Citizenship Education (GCED). Tagore’s message of cultural variety emphasised the importance of cultural understanding and respect. Students at Shantiniketan have the opportunity to interact with teachers and peers from throughout the world, thereby exposing them to other cultural practices. Integrated pedagogy fostered interdisciplinary learning by combining conventional academic fields with the arts, music, and environmental studies. Community and collaborative learning promoted student collaboration and togetherness within a collective learning environment. Students develop social and interpersonal skills through collaborative endeavours and group activities. Experiential learning, encompassing outdoor exploration, artistic expression, and practical tasks, cultivates respect and understanding for the environment. In a culture confronting complex global challenges, Tagore’s visionary ideals and emphasis on cultural interaction and comprehension remain highly significant. In a progressively interconnected world, his message of unity, acceptance of variety, and the imperative to transcend national and cultural boundaries is particularly significant.

**Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)**

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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