DHEERYA FOUNDATION
Edusights

PROJECT REPORT

Mode: Online

Dates: Between July & August of 2020

Abstract

Edusights was an initiative created to start a discussion on the different methods of education and to ask ourselves;

Is our current Education System working smoothly?

Edusights was a series of sessions conducted online, where each session introduced a different method/system of education. This took place during the July/August of 2020.

Mainstream education is something that is common and we've all been a part of it. It was introduced by the British as part of colonial rule and it hasn't changed ever since. A lot has evolved since then. We have seen a rise in an alternative method of education called 'Unconventional Schooling'.

The sessions initiated a dialogue between the volunteers about finding a viable method of education other than the conventional education provided in schools.

Why Edusights came into being

The pandemic made it very difficult for Dheerya to help out orphanages and other kids in need. With lockdowns and travel restrictions, conducting on-ground work became impossible. We really wanted to do something during this time. We thought that we could be doing more, just from our homes. So, we took the opportunity to dig deeper, come up with a curriculum or even activities with which we could connect with the kids a little better.

The pandemic brought with it a wind of change and we're trying to adapt accordingly.

Session 1 - Gurukul System of Education

Looking at the system beyond the ancient guru-shishya tradition followed in Hinduism.

Edusights kicked off with one of the earliest forms of the residential education system, the Gurukul Education System. Students would live with their teacher, 'Acharya' and the education was heavily based on hard work and discipline. A very strict routine followed where the students learnt and helped their Guru in daily tasks. It was considered highly prestigious to be handpicked by a Guru to study in their Gurukul in those days.

Some of the features of Gurukul Education are:-
- It was heavily influenced by culture and religion.
- The focus was on mainly spiritual, professional and social education.
- The all-around development of an individual was given emphasis; be it psychological or physical.
- A lot of practical knowledge was imparted by the Gurus along with knowledge about art and literature.
- The students stayed with their Gurus for ideally 25 years until their marriage.
- Gurukul Education was only provided to boys.

Dhriti, the speaker of the session, says, "As citizens of a country with such a rich culture and wisdom, I felt the need to investigate age-old practices in education itself. While looking at our Gurukul System, I was wondering if anyone has tried to implement it in real life. Looking further at it, I found many alternative learning and teaching ideologies."

The participants were given the floor to discuss and deliberate

Points discussed included:

1. Isn't the Gurukul System too stringent and rigid?
   Western Education provides students with a choice to choose their subjects and specializations according to their interests, which is contrary to the generalized education provided in the Gurukul System.
   Rebuttal - The System had multiple Gurus for different skills and there was one main Guru who looked after the Gurukul and the students.

2. Is it proven to be better than other Systems?
   Statistics that maybe deem that the Gurukul system was more efficient than the western system of education.

Answer - Although there are no statistics available, research papers and other tools have determined that Gurukul worked more efficiently. The reasoning is that the education focused on the soft skills of the student at a very young age which is not given enough importance in conventional education. The syllabus-based approach of Western education leaves very little room to identify the students' talents because of the lack of practical, hands-on teaching methods.

3. What about the Education Systems other than the Western?
The Finnish Education System and the Isha Schooling in India handle education differently.

The Finnish Education System
Education from pre-primary to higher education is free in Finland. The main focus of Finnish Education is to provide universal good quality. A few of their successes include; personalized learning, very little use of standardized testing, minimum homework, adult learning, inclusivity, etc. The early years of the students are focused on care, nurture and growth. The actual schooling only begins at age 7.

The Isha Schooling in India
Isha Home School was founded by Sadhguru in 2005. It has incorporated the residential schooling method. Isha School has inculcated education through a day-to-day teaching process. They have tried to bring a blend of home and school into their education. This takes children between the ages of 7-13.

The Gurukul System taught about Hindu practices

4. Inequality of the Gurukul System

Gurukul Education did not give equal opportunities to all students. The only caste accepted in a Gurukul was the Brahmin caste.

Pros and Cons:

Pros:	Cons:
More practical knowledge	Caste discrimination
Increased engagement between students and teachers	Stricter rules and lesser choice of syllabus
All-around development	Higher expectations from the student
Lessons of ethics and morals	Students stayed away from their homes from a very tender age
No pressure of any ranking	Gender discrimination

system	

Conclusion:-

The session ended with an agreement on how some advantageous principles from the Gurukul system can be incorporated into the present-day scenario.

Session 2 - Western System of Education

A discussion about Western Education in comparison to the Gurukul System of Education.

After discussing the earliest Education System known to India, the Gurukul System of education, it was time to look at the highly-discussed method of education, Western Education. Western Education has its fair share of criticizers but many have also appreciated the way it is paving paths for a different learning approach.

The Modern Education in India

Modern Education has gone through changes over the years.

In 1835, English started dominating as a medium of employment and education in India. Macaulay held western culture in high esteem and was dismissive of the existent Indian culture. Hence education lost its self-own esteem and Indian touch. Modern education is conscious and deliberate, at the same time the aims of education are dynamic.

Colonialism has made India lose its identity, suffer cultural degradation, distance from its indigenous learning techniques, fear being inferior to the Westerners.

Current State of Modern Education in India -

- Inequality

- Gender disparity

- Lacking in quality

- Limited student engagement

- Limited practical knowledge

- No ties with the Indian culture

After a brief explanation, the discussion was opened to the participants

The Key Points Discussed Included:

1. Failure of the Modern Education System is the fault of society.

Originally, in the Modern System, the students were given a choice to choose the subjects that they want to study. The students get exposed to the outside world through this system. Our society played a huge role in why this method failed. This could also be a con for the Gurukul System of Education. The Gurukul system mainly focuses on the Indian culture and they are not worried about the outside world whereas the Western system addresses everything that is happening in the world through education. The underprivileged children have face inconveniences.

Rebuttal - The Western System impacts the way society as a whole thinks.

2. Western Education has stopped us from exploring our imagination.

The western method is based on proof whereas, the Indian method is based on experience. There are shlokas and mantras in Indian languages that were meant to teach you about life and science. There is shloka that is purely about all the planets in the solar system. Our methods would also work wonders if we're willing to look for the right study material.

3. It causes competition and comparison

A bad repercussion of education is that there is comparison and competition everywhere.

Rebuttal - Maybe, this is not a fault of the Western Education System but it is just human tendency. But the competition around a child shouldn't bother him/her if they have a strong foundation, which is absent in today's generation because of the lack of confidence.
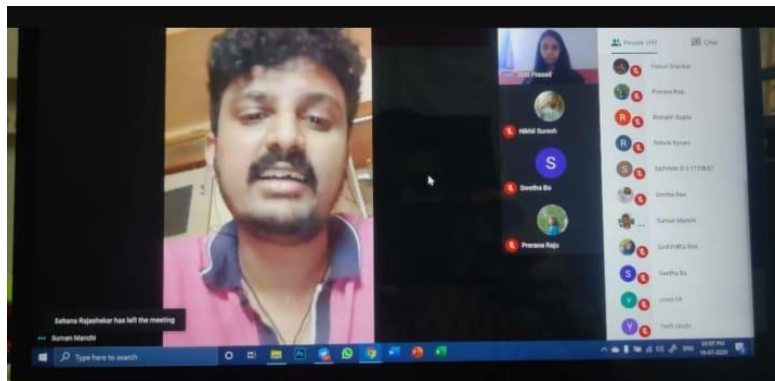
4. Western Education is inclusive of women

The Gurukul system was majorly male-oriented. The Western system has helped enable women to achieve their dreams and live up to their potential.

5. Western Education unified India through English

Western Education unified India, a land where several languages are spoken by introducing English.

Rebuttal - The Britishers never wanted to unify India and never did. They adopted the 'Divide and Rule Policy' that was aimed to divide Indians by their religious beliefs and economic status. Besides this, a person understands concepts best when they are taught in his/her native language.

6. A blend of Western Education and Gurukul Education

Various aspects from both the Western system and the Gurukul system can be taken and developed into an indigenous plan which will help the underprivileged kids. The main aim is an alternative education that brings in more practical knowledge than theoretical knowledge.

PROS AND CONS

PROS	CONS
● Healthy competition. ● This system allowed girls and women to live up to their dreams through education. ● English helped to standardize and unify India and also acted as a means to impart our knowledge and also in bridging the gap. ● It helped the Indians to explore.	● This system instils fear in students concerning failure and punishments. ● There is a lot of competition and comparison which results in the inferiority of the students. ● It prevented the Indians from thinking beyond their imagination.

● It enhanced living standards and prospects for the future.	● The underprivileged are the ones who are the most affected by this system. ● Aspects like adultery and abortion have become common.

Conclusion:

The Western education and the Gurukul system of education can be combined in such a way that the all-round development of the child can be achieved through more practical learning than theoretical learning. The kids must be given independence, freedom, opportunity and life skills. They also need confidence and exposure to achieve their goals.

Thus, the session ended with an agreement of how some advantageous principles from both the Western system and the Gurukul system can be combined and be incorporated into the present-day scenario.

Session 3 - Transformational Learning

Transformative learning was first introduced by Merizow. According to SpringerLink, transformational learning is the process of deep, constructive, and meaningful learning that goes beyond simple knowledge acquisition and supports critical ways in which learners consciously make meaning of their lives.

Waldorf Education and Montessori Education have seemingly taken inspiration from this and have found their own method of education. Our guest speakers, Swetha Ma'am and Kishan conducted the sessions and explained a little bit about the two types of education.

Waldorf Education

Waldorf Education is based on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. Steiner is also the founder of Anthroposophy.

The development of a child is usually divided into these stages:

Phase 1 - Infancy up to the change of teeth

Phase 2 - From the change of teeth to puberty

Phase 3 - From puberty to maturity

The assessment of a child's progress is based on the child's temperament, weaknesses and strengths, behaviour and progress in the subjects they are learning. It enables the true development of a child's physical and mental

state. It also teaches the importance of expression, feelings, emotions and thoughts.

Montessori education

[Montessori education](#) is the kind that can be applied to any child, at any age. This concept was originally developed by Maria Montessori. Montessori education is meant to provide students with well-crafted environments, designed to make the learning process easier.

The characteristics of a Montessori school are:

- Nurturing environment

- Growth in independence and self-regulation

- Identifying abilities and fine-tuning them

- Exploring imagination

- Engaging and self-conducted activities

- Build an understanding of their surroundings and nature

The discussion by the participants went as followed:

1. How can we judge students in today's world without comparison?

The Montessori method of education ensures that students aren't pitted against each other but there is a lot of competition in today's world even in adulthood. How do we judge a student without any comparison or standard?

Response - In Montessori, by the age of six, the child will be able to write essays and have a good grip over the vocabulary whereas, a child studying in the Western System, who might be of the same age, will still be studying numbers and pronunciations. A child in the 10th standard, studying in Montessori, will be independent and will know how to handle failure if they ever experience it. Montessori provides more exposure than any other school.

2. What is exactly taught in Montessori and what is the duration of the course?

Montessori follows an unconventional method of education, where they don't have a syllabus, textbooks or even exams. How is the course conducted?

Response - The schooling is divided into two age groups; children from ages 3-6 are in one environment and children from ages 6-12 in another. The older children help the younger ones and they learn together. About the

curriculum, whatever is taught to the students in the Western Education System is also taught in Montessori Education.

3. It is necessary to find a system that is best suited for all children

Schools should pay closer attention to each child individually. One child might be a fast learner while another might be slower at grasping concepts. The main agenda of these sessions is to make education child-centric and to make sure all childrens' needs are met.

4. Current Montessori schools in India are not very effective in India

The current Government schools follow the Montessori method up to the 3rd standard. But it is a very flawed system because this is not continued later on in their education so, most of it is forgotten by them later. Also, it is considerably new in India and we don't have trained teachers for it.

5. The distinction between Montessori and Waldorf

In Montessori, the child comes out as a clean slate and learns through experience. Whereas, in Waldorf, the child has complete knowledge when after their schooling. But this just depends on the quality of the teacher.

6. We can't always control the child's environment at all times for optimum education

In Waldorf education, the child imitates and virtualizes their surroundings. How can we control the things that they experience and the people that they meet?

Response - The age between 0-6 years is crucial because everything is absorbed in that age. Whatever the child learns at that age will kind of impact his/her lifestyle. If the child comes across a suspicious incident, then he/she will apply whatever was taught to them in class and analyse the incident. By the age of 6, the child is aware of the types of people and the culture so, they will understand how to react in different situations because of the awareness that is brought to the student in the schooling process (Montessori).

7. Can you tell a difference between both types of students?

Is there a distinctive difference between the students of Conventional teachings and the students of Alternative teachings?

Response - Yes. When both are met with similar situations, there is an evident difference in their problem-solving methods. The difference is mainly in their soft skills, not their knowledge. The confidence levels are also different depending on their teachings.

8. Are there any provisions in either of the methods for children with learning disabilities?

Learning disabilities are usually just ignored and dismissed under the reason of laziness. This doesn't bode well for the future of the children. It should be recognized and acknowledged by the teachers.

Response - Dr Maria Montessori first tried out this system with specially challenged children. The apparatus used in Montessori is scientifically designed so if the child is having any problems, they can be identified depending on how they use the apparatus. If there is a physical or

comprehensive issue, a special educator is called to take care of the child's education.

9. How can we make lessons that will be remembered by the students?

Younger children tend to forget the lesson taught in the previous class when they come for the next one. How to avoid this?

Response - The first 2/3 sessions must be focused on understanding the child's needs and making the sessions very interactive. This way you will understand the capacities of the students. They should be given storybooks that have lots of pictures because they will provide visual stimulation.

PROS AND CONS OF MONTESSORI:

PROS	CONS
● It provides hands-on learning. ● Enhanced social interaction. ● Good learning environment. ● It develops soft skills.	● Independence is not always useful.

● It provides independence.	● The curriculum is loose and the classroom structure can be intimidating. ● Lack of exams might become a disadvantage.

PROS AND CONS OF WALDORF EDUCATION:

PROS	CONS
● Children can learn at their own pace. ● Lots of outdoor time. ● Kids learn to live a tech-free life at least in the classroom. ● Children are given a lot of individual attention.	● One teacher for all grades may feel restrictive for some. ● Since academics are not stressed, some children may not acquire basic skills. ● Lack of testing gives students a disadvantage.

CONCLUSION:

● The child must be given independence in the activities organized.

● 2-3 sessions should be focused on what the child needs, arranging activities and giving opportunities to them and that way it is easy to understand their capabilities.

● We must create a strong bond with the child by talking to them personally, that time they tend to share their feelings.

- Thus, the session ended with an agreement of how the advantageous principles of Montessori and Waldorf education and also all the solutions are given by the participants can be taken and can be converted into a plan and be incorporated into the present-day scenario.