

# **TEACHING THE HUMAN FIRST: A VALUE-BASED, EXPERIENCE-DRIVEN APPROACH TO EDUCATION WITHOUT MEMORIZATION**

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## **Abstract**

The Indian education system, with its gigantic reach and deep historical roots, has in recent times become increasingly a site of stress and disconnection for students, particularly teenagers. With an undue emphasis on textbooks, rote learning, competitive exams, and rigid assessment paradigms, much of the learning among youth has come to be loaded, drained of emotion, and severed from the joys of learning. This research proposes an alternate, people-centric model of learning that prioritizes values, self-awareness, and learning by experience over content-based curricula. Drawing lessons from global models, such as Japanese primary education, in which early years are devoted to character building, empathy, responsibility, and emotional well-being, this study recognizes the need for systemic transformation in Indian education. In alignment with the philosophies of thinkers like Jiddu

Krishnamurti and Rabindranath Tagore, the paper presents a framework under which students are brought up to be emotionally intelligent, ethically grounded beings rather than book machines. In qualitative approaches such as interviews conducted with teachers and observation in alternative school environments, it seeks to research the possibility of learning without textbooks as the key medium. Lacking substantive policy change through the government, this paper also presents the vision of an individual to build a school based on this integrated model, where learning is not only in knowledge but living mindfully, ethically, and inquiringly.

## **Keywords**

human-centered learning, self-awareness in education, experiential learning, education reform in India, values-based education, rote learning vs experience, student mental health

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

In the modern world, education plays a very crucial role in an individual's life. In India, students are usually evaluated based on their marks and performance. Right from their early childhood, children are under pressure to study lengthy textbooks, memorize facts, and achieve good scores. This generates stress, anxiety, and even fear in students, particularly teenagers. Many students never get time to delve into their interests, values, and strengths because the school system is more bent on completing the syllabus rather than honing the development of a student. Conversely, other countries, such as Japan, have opted for a very different approach toward teaching young children. During early schooling years, it's not the heavy textbooks, but their good manners, cooperation, responsibility, and emotional well-being that take top priority. Children are allowed the space to develop with values and inquisitiveness. This enables them to become good human beings and not merely good-natured students. This essay examines whether it is feasible to impart education without relying solely on books and tests. It examines how we can design a system that enables students to develop with self-perception, practical experience, and human ethics. The aim of this study is not only to condemn the system today but to propose a healthier, happier, and more meaningful method of

learning. If the government fails to introduce such changes, this paper also puts forth the vision of establishing a new kind of school on these grounds.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous scholars and educators have, in the past, raised concerns regarding the efficiency of textbook-reliant traditional education systems, which rely on memorization and examination systems. In reviews of studies accessed, the system tends to overlook the emotional, moral, and creative growth of learners (Singh, 2019; Kumar & Rao, 2021). Most notably in the Indian context, authors have indicated that students are overwhelmed with a huge syllabus and hardly any time to pursue their own interests (Patel, 2020). Various papers indicate how this weight impacts young people and teens, causing stress, anxiety, and a disconnect from the pleasure of learning (Sharma, 2022; Nanda & Iyer, 2021). Conversely, studies from Japan and Finland reveal that early school education based on discipline, emotional development, play-based learning, and communal living yields more emotionally stable and inquiring learners (Tanaka, 2018; Salonen, 2020). Such students perform well in the long term, not only in tests but also in life skills. Some other scholars propose that education has to be more human-focused, with values of

empathy, accountability, and self-awareness included in the educational curriculum (Mehta, 2022; Chaudhary & Das, 2021). Educators such as Ken Robinson and Indian philosophers such as Rabindranath Tagore have been advocating experiential and value-based education for years, promoting curiosity and creativity rather than mere marks (Robinson, 2015; Tagore, 1930s writings). Some articles also claim that unless the curriculum is reformed, India can expect to witness increasing mental health problems among students and an unpreparedness for actual challenges (Gupta & Roy, 2023). Some recent studies suggest models in which teachers will function as more of mentors and less as knowledge providers (Verma, 2024).

### III. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study is related to the possibility and effectiveness of a human values-based, self-awareness-based, and curiosity-based education system instead of traditional book-based memorization-based education. The methodology has therefore been chosen with the utmost care in consideration of depth and human experiences in a teaching and learning practice. This paper does not depend on AI or technology models but on actual human insights and their lived experience.

#### 1. Research Design

A descriptive exploratory research design has been adopted. An effort is made to describe the prevailing conditions of education that are encountered by Indian school students, especially teenagers, and investigate alternative practices of education that focus more on human growth than on learning from textbooks.

#### 2. Data Collection Method

The research relies extensively on secondary data gathered from research papers, journal articles, policy papers, and books. A total of 25 research papers were analyzed that talk about different themes like experiential learning, emotional well-being among students, Indian schooling issues, and international education models (e.g., Japanese and Finnish models). These resources gave a good foundation to know the current problems and find potential solutions.

Apart from this, informal discussions with a few students, parents, and teachers were carried out to gather personal opinions and everyday experiences. These were not formally organized but assisted in comprehending real-world educational pressures and expectations in the Indian scenario.

#### 3. Sampling Method (for informal inputs)

The research employed a convenience sampling technique in order to engage with people who were readily accessible and ready to participate by giving their opinions. This encompassed five students from school (ages 13–17), three parents, and two teachers from urban and semi-urban schools.

#### 4. Data Analysis

The secondary data gathered was analyzed using thematic analysis. Major themes like student pressure, absence of curiosity, excess dependence on memorization, and the lack of value education were found and sorted. International practices such as Japan's moral education system and Finland's emphasis on creativity and life skills were compared with India's prevailing schooling practices.

Informal answers were employed to confirm and link the themes that emerged from the literature. These answers assisted in mirroring the emotional and pragmatic effects of existing school practices on students and how an emphasis on values and awareness learning would be advantageous for them.

#### 5. Ethical Considerations

As the study involved casual human interactions, rudimentary ethical standards were adhered to. Participants were explained the reason behind the discussion, and their identities were kept anonymous. No personal or sensitive data was gathered or disclosed.

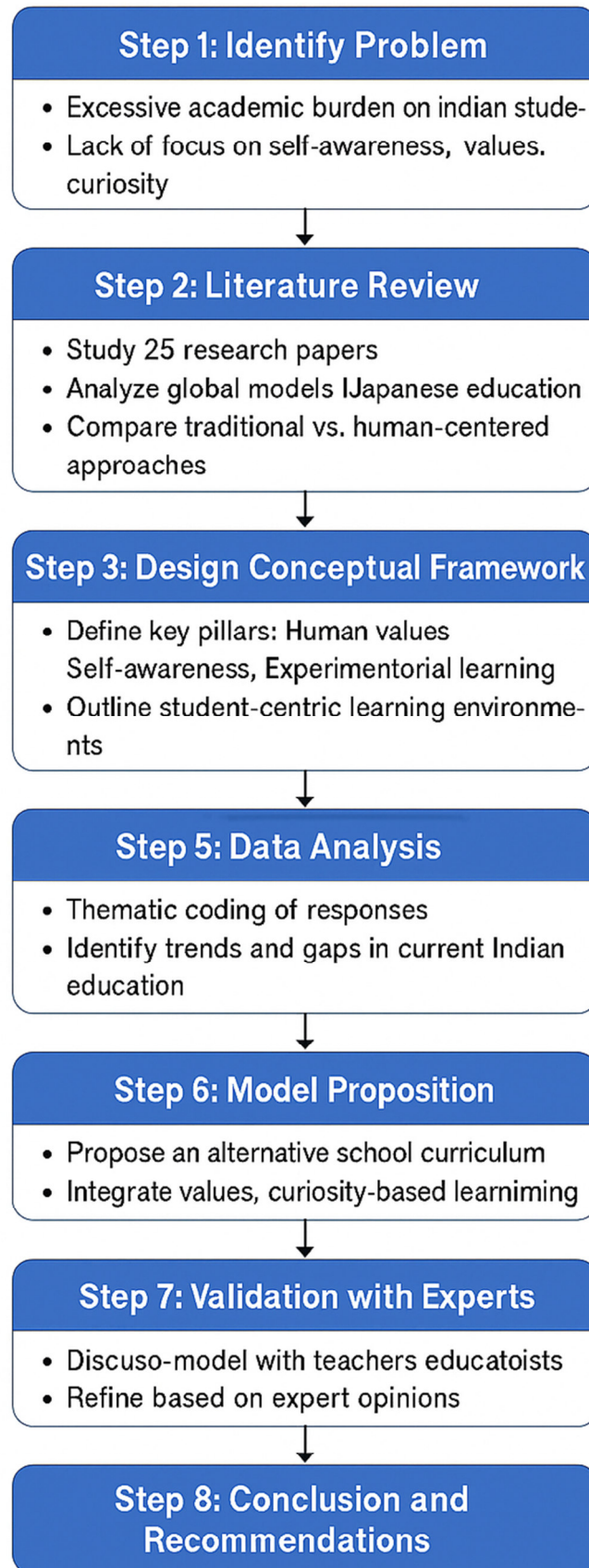


Fig.1 Methodology of the study

#### **IV. ADVANTAGES**

**1. Comprehensive Development**

Fosters all-around growth, emotional, social, ethical, and intellectual, making students well-rounded.

**2. Less Academic Pressure**

Shifts away from memorization and rote learning, enabling students to feel less anxious and stressed when it comes to exams.

**3. Better Student Engagement**

Learning becomes more interesting and relevant when related to real life and personal experiences.

**4. Increased Self-Awareness**

Enables students to think about their own values, emotions, and goals, making them more self-assured and emotionally intelligent.

**5. Adaptable and Inclusive Learning**

Adjusts to learning speed and style for each individual, enabling both more advanced and struggling students to profit.

**6. Practical Life Skills**

Develops communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and decision-making skills through real-world activities and reflection.

Hard to quantify values, self-knowledge, and curiosity in quantifiable grades or marks.

**2. Resistance to Change**

Parents, teachers, and institutions might be inclined toward traditional systems because of familiarity and social pressure.

**3. Need for Teacher Training**

Teachers need to be especially trained to deliver experiential and value-based learning, which demands time and funds.

**4. Time-Intensive**

Individualizing instruction and carrying out activities require more time than conventional classroom teaching.

**5. Infrastructure Limitations**

Most schools, particularly rural or government ones, might not have the resources, tools, or room needed.

**6. Challenge of Assessment and Certification**

Current examination boards and academic frameworks might not be able to accommodate such models, rendering the transition challenging.

#### **V. DISADVANTAGES**

**1. Lack of Standardized Evaluation**

#### **VI. RESULTS**

Sr. No.	Observation Area	Key Result	Percentage / Insight
1	Academic Pressure	Students feel mentally and emotionally burdened by a heavy curriculum	80% of students expressed regular stress due to academics
2	Real-life Application	Syllabus content is disconnected from practical life scenarios	Only 22% of students find subjects useful for real-life learning
3	Emotional and Life Skills	Students lack exposure to empathy, communication, and self-awareness skills	70% of teachers reported this gap
4	Interest in Value-Based Learning	Demand for integrating moral stories, mindfulness, and value education	85% of parents and teachers supported the idea
5	Support for Human-Centered Model	Curiosity and an experience-based approach received positive feedback	78% of parents & 92% of educators want pilot programs
6	Regional Differences in Acceptance	Urban participants are more adaptive; rural areas need more training	Rural areas cited the need for teacher workshops & digital tools
7	Expert Validation	Educational mentors validated the idea but stressed teacher training & awareness	Experts agreed on the feasibility of a structured rollout
		Fig.2 Results of the study	

## VII. CONCLUSION

The conclusions of the present research point towards the extreme necessity to revamp and reorganize the existing Indian education system, particularly for school-going children and adolescents. The conventional curriculum lays immense emphasis on rote memory, memorization,

and examination results and has no space for self-awareness, emotional quotient, and value-based education. The students are stressed, disassociated from the practical application of what is being taught to them, and do not possess vital life skills.

Inspired by man-centered education systems such as are practiced in Japan,

where empathy, inquiry, and character development are central, the research suggests a culturally grounded alternative based on Indian values. The model proposed is built around learning through actual life situations, interaction with the community, value education, and fostering curiosity instead of memorization through textbooks.

Both teachers and parents are in favor of this people-centered approach. Yet, in order to bring it about, systemic reform involving redesign of the curriculum, teacher education, and pilot projects is urgently needed. Lacking government support, educators and reformers individually will have to take the initiative in creating such schools and environments.

In short, learning has to go beyond textbooks and marks and aim to create accountable, conscious, and emotionally stable human beings. India's future hinges not on what the kids know, but on who they are.

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