

Self-awakening Approach to achieve Sustainable Education in Neo-Normal Situation based on Postulates of Rabindrik Psychotherapy

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Abstract

The aim of education is to equip or empower the learners so that they can implement their knowledge in real-life situations, even beyond the classroom and curriculum. Sustainable education has been impaired due to the devastating effect of the prolonged pandemic. Education for sustainable development (ESD) is defined as education that encourages changes in knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to enable a more sustainable society for all. A “sustainable society” is one in which we do not damage the environment or overuse resources and are therefore able to leave a beautiful, peaceful, and bountiful earth that future generations can continue to inhabit. A sustainable society can be created by sustainable education.

Sustainable education occurs when the learning concepts can be manipulated for the purposes of coping, adapting, and transforming society to be more sustainable. During the prolonged pandemic, the most difficult issue was determining how to make teaching sustainable in the absence of real-time support from teachers. To make the lesson sustainable, it should be associated with the flow of imagination. Flows occur at each and across layers of consciousness—“Murta” (the seat of attention and perception), “Raag” (the seat of feeling and emotion, and its association with other faculties), and “Saraswat” (the seat of harmony). Flows facilitate the self-awakening approach, leading to a sustainable society. A self-awakening approach refers to learning from within the self. This approach inhibits rote learning or surface-level learning. Here, the teacher acts as a facilitator to help the learners become independent in constructing their own knowledge and interpretation. The self-awakening approach facilitates learners to modify, apply, and innovate the learned lessons. This study proposes the self-awakening approach for sustainable education in neo-normal situations, following the principles of Rabindrik Psychotherapy. The present paper aims to focus on the following points (a) the importance of sustainable development in a neo-normal environment, (b) the topographical structure of consciousness, (c) flow theories, and (d) the Self-Awakening approach to education’s teaching pedagogy in a neo-normal environment.

Key words: sustainable education, neo normal situation, self-awakening approach, topographical structure of consciousness, flow theories.

Introduction

Education for sustainable development allows every individual to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to shape a sustainable society. It emphasizes

participatory teaching-learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behavior and act for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2014). Since such education encircles all pedagogy subjects and continues even beyond the classroom and

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curriculum, it equips students with real-world skills needed to improve the planet. Hence, a shift towards a participative, engaging, creative, and experiential teaching-learning approach to make the learning applicable to real-life situations is required. More than a decade back, in 2010, the Council of the European Union notified that, “ESD is essential for the achievement of a sustainable society and is therefore desirable at all levels of formal education and training, as well as in non-formal and informal learning” (2010. 327/12). By creating interactive and learner-centered teaching-learning situations and integrating content like climate change, poverty, and sustainable consumption into the curriculum, ESD suggests an action-based as well as transformative pedagogy promoting self-directed learning, participation and collaboration, problem-orientation, and so on (UNESCO, 2017). This observation is still pertinent enough, and has even become more serious after experiencing the havoc of the pandemic for more than two and a half years. Some progress already made to meet the SDG4 (Sustainable Development Goal 4) goals of the 2030 Education Agenda has been lost. The deadly blows of the prolonged pandemic have almost crippled sustainable education. Therefore, providing sustainable education in this new normal situation and selecting the most appropriate pedagogy for that purpose are the biggest challenges for educational institutions in this neo-normal situation.

Situation: Neo-Normal

Since the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic caused by novel coronavirus, the entire world is undergoing a deep crisis in terms of heavy loss of life, health, economy, and education (WHO, 2020a). A UNESCO report (2020) says that the pandemic affected more than 1.5 billion students and young people and hit the most vulnerable learners the worst. The peak of the pandemic caused the closure of schools in 45 countries in Europe and Central Asia, resulting in the learning loss of 185 million students. Among various decisions taken on an emergency basis by various countries to suit their own contexts, the transformation of the teaching-learning-cum-evaluation process from face-to-face mode to the virtual one has been extremely challenging. The online education pattern initiated by China was gradually adopted by 45 more countries, and by the end of April 2020, 172 countries

decided to shift from the face-to-face mode to the online one (Ibid). After combating three waves, schools have reopened. It has been found that despite the maximum efforts to develop an alternative online education system to compensate for the face-to-face mode, it could not be fully successful and ended up with huge learning losses and a rise in inequality in education, as revealed by evidence from Brazil, rural parts of India and Pakistan, South Africa, Mexico, etc., which report substantial losses in math and reading.

All the above indicate the absence of adequate sustainability in online education, without which the lessons learnt remain in the murta layer of consciousness. RabindrikMurta is the first layer of the topographical structure of consciousness in Rabindrik psychotherapy based on the postulates derived from the songs and other literary works of Rabindranath Tagore in clinical settings. Any anomaly in the Murta, being the seat of attention and perception, causes a sense of missing or distortion of information. Because it is free of emotion and manipulation to achieve educational goals, the information in the Murta layer remains in a concrete form. For example, a rose is comprehended by its petals and colour in the Murta layer. Rose does not create any emotion in the murta layer. Since providing students with sustainable education in this new normal situation poses a great challenge to the entire education system, and since the ongoing teaching-learning process seems to be inadequately equipped and less effective to churn the minds of the young learners with sustainability and to cope with new problems and conflict by themselves, a new pedagogical approach needs to be sought out.

Teaching pedagogy and study objectives

Pedagogy refers to the way of teaching students, whether it is the theory or practise of education. It is a relationship between the culture and the techniques of learning. The main aim of pedagogy is to build on the previous learning of the students and work on the development of skills and attitudes of the learners. Pedagogies are broadly classified into five types: 1. constructivist, which encourages learners to construct actively and independently the meaning and knowledge of their surroundings based on past and current experience, rather than being merely passive recipients of transmitted information (Priitchard&Woollard, 2010); 2. constructivist, which encourages learners to

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construct actively and independently the meaning and knowledge of their surroundings based on past and current experience; 3. constructivist, which encourages learners to 3. Collaborative that makes learners work together in pairs or groups (Laal & Laal, 2012) and emphasises the social aspect of learning by encouraging participants to talk with each other to make the learning occur (Smith & MacGregor, 1992; Gerlach, 1994); 3. 4. Reflective, which includes a process of self-learning, self-evaluation, and self-observation about what the teacher and learners are doing in the classroom, why they are doing it, and how it works, and so on, with the goal of thinking and reflecting on the teaching-learning process to improve future transactions (Whitworth, 2012), and 5. Inquiry-based learning, which goes far beyond answering questions correctly and includes investigation, exploration, search, quest, research, pursuit, and study, thereby creating a knowledge culture in which diverse ideas are respectfully challenged, tested, and redefined (Kuhlthau, Maniotes & Caspari, 2007; Pedaste, et al., 2015). Following the postulates of Rabindrik Psychotherapy, we get one new approach, namely the self-awakening approach. This study aims to examine the self-awakening approach through some case studies.

Self-awakening Approach

Before going through the self-awakening approach in detail, self-concept in psychology should be discussed in brief. In psychological research, self-concept is important as it acts as a motivator. A self-concept is a collection of beliefs about oneself. Generally, self-concept embodies the answer to the question, “Who am I?” A self-concept is a cognitive or descriptive component of one’s self. It is made up of one’s self-schema and interacts with self-esteem, self-knowledge, and the social self to form the self as a whole. It includes the past, present, and future selves, where the future self represents the individual’s ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, or what they are afraid of becoming. Psychologist Carl Rogers and psychologist Abraham Maslow were influential in popularising the concept of the self-concept in the West. According to Rogers, everyone strives to reach their “ideal self”. He believed that people are self-actualized when they prove to themselves that they are capable enough to achieve their goals and desires, but in order to attain their fullest potential, they must have been raised in healthy

surroundings that consist of genuineness, acceptance, and sympathy. Abraham Maslow argued that self-actualization is the higher-level growth need. He noticed that once individuals reach this level, they tend to grow “as a person” and reach the level of self-actualization. However, negative events experienced by individuals while being at the lower deficit need level prevent them from ascending in the hierarchy of needs.

Rabindrik Psychotherapy is assumed to be analogous with dynamic flows across the layers of consciousness, namely Murta, Raag, and Saraswat in Rabindrik Psychotherapy. By laying emphasis on performing art therapy, Rabindrik Psychotherapy refers to an evidence-based psychotherapeutic treatment to enhance mental wellness, meaningfulness in life, and positive imagination using its own therapeutic postulates. A postulate is a basic assumption of a theory. Some significant postulates of Rabindrik Psychotherapy as derived by Dr. D. Dutta Roy are as follows:

Do not label, rather understand others’ consciousness.

Consciousness is free-floating. Look at it as a detached being.

Make consciousness unbound and experience it freely. Experiencing consciousness is like a journey from incomplete to complete across its layers—Murta (outer layer), Raga (inner layer), and Saraswat (innermost core). Consciousness elements are free to move across the layers.

Each person is a pursuer of newness and completeness or harmony among all the impulses or desires scattered across the consciousness. This completeness, or harmony, is sought in the physical, social, and psychosocial environments. Following the principles of pattern perception, humans tend to organise their impulses. Failing to achieve completeness causes tension, and prolonged tension paves the way for illness.

Searching for newness makes one incomplete, and that drives one to seek for completeness. This journey from the incomplete to the completed is a cyclic process.

The therapist (here the teacher), with the help of the performing arts of Tagore, creates such an ambiance that leads the client (here the student) to self-evaluation, understanding, and overcome his/her own conflict of layer dynamics. Teachers’ function is to understand the location of consciousness, loci, and its coverage, and then to facilitate the flow effectively.

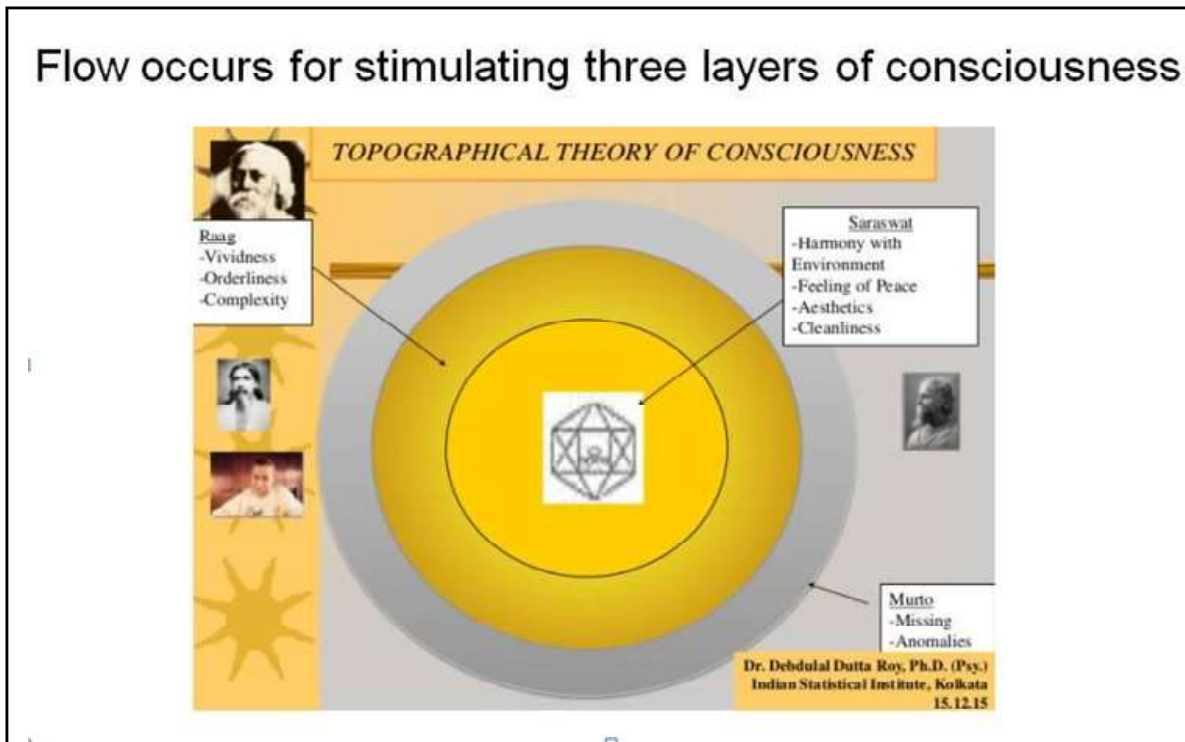


Figure 1. Topographical model of flow dynamics of consciousness

Figure 1 shows a topographical model of the flow dynamics of consciousness. It can be seen that flow occurs by stimulating three layers of consciousness. Raag, the inner layer that provides feelings and emotional experiences, and Saraswat, the innermost core that represents harmony and peace experiences, Whereas the Murta layer brings instability and unreliability, the Saraswat layer modifies these. It is

flow that helps consciousness move across these three layers. Rabindra sangeet creates that flow as well as reconstructs consciousness. In consciousness, positive, negative, and neutral images are moved (Figure 2), which creates different types of image processing and image clustering. The intensity and density of specific images change our behavior

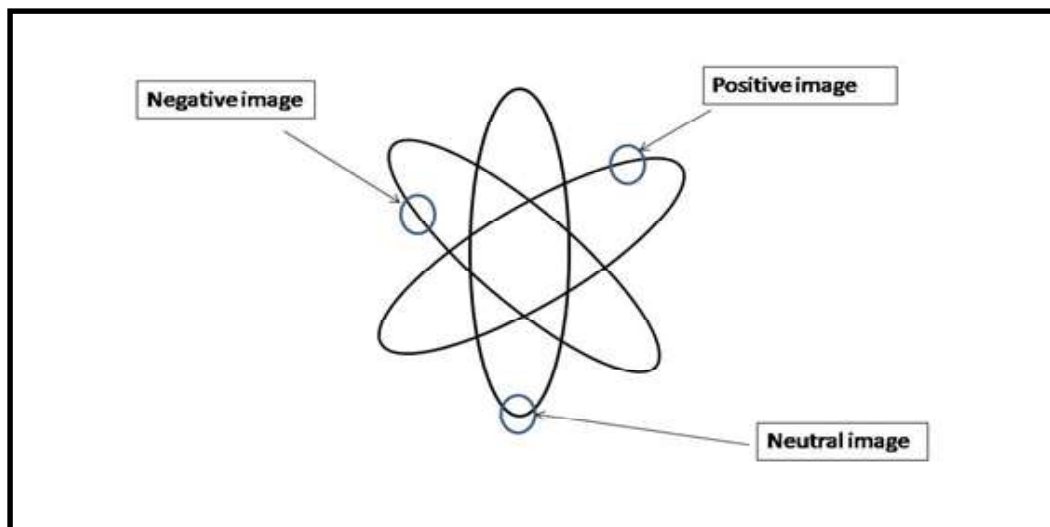


Figure 2. Images are moving in Consciousness

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Rabindra sangeet is a journey from the outer layer to the innermost core. This journey assists in introspection of strength and the limitation of our own impulses. The insight about the nature of impulses helps with autosuggestion. Thus, Rabindra sangeet illuminates self-awakening among us by generating the required flow movement in our consciousness. Any deficiency in flow at any particular layer prevents one from moving to another layer. The Murta layer provides information about the morphological structure of the object. It is a

stage of sensation and perception. The Raag layer represents the emotional attachment to the object. But in the Saraswat layer, there is no difference between the object and the self, because the self and the object are not different from each other; they are in union. Rabindrik Psychotherapy includes eight properties: real time, object-oriented, evidence-based, brief therapy, auto-suggestive, human value-based, flow theory, and universalism (Figure 3)

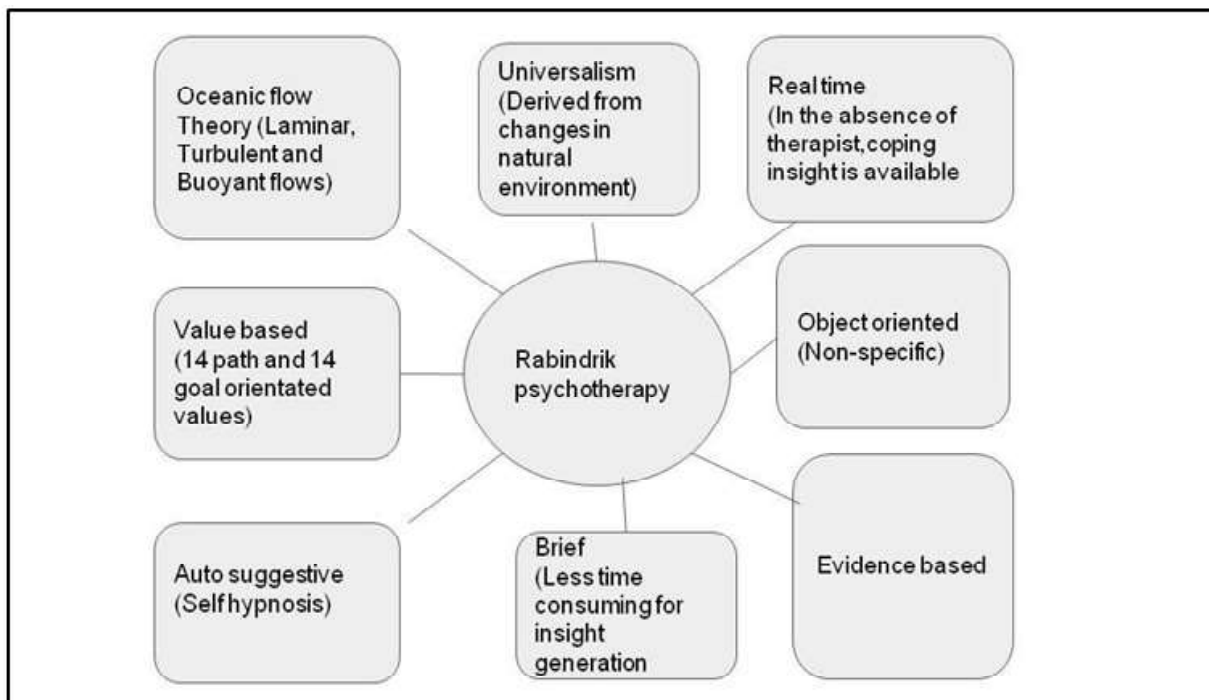


Figure 3. Properties of Rabindrik Psychotherapy

The self-awakening approach is based on the postulates of Rabindrik Psychotherapy, extracted from Tagore's literary works, especially Rabindra Sangeet. Self-awakening refers to the movement of flow across three layers—from Murta to Raag, and from Raag to Saraswat. The object is perceived differently depending on the different locations of the locus of consciousness. When the locus of consciousness lies in the Murta layer, the individual attends to the external attributes of the object. When the locus of consciousness lies at the Raag layer, the individual attends to the functional attributes of the object and is able to find out its meaning. Finally, when the locus of consciousness lies at the Saraswat layer, the individual cannot make any discrimination between the object and the self and tends to create a new object. This process is called self-

awakening. The self-awakening process is self-regulated. There are three processes of self-awakening, which may be described as positioning the individual self in a problem; positioning the self in a simulated problem created by the individual; and reflecting the self by identifying with some character in a problem and seeking the solution.

This approach is based on the unsupervised model; the teacher here plays the role of a facilitator who creates the free flow in students' consciousness. With the help of Tagore's literary works, especially Rabindra Sangeet and other performing arts, this approach triggers the layer dynamics of consciousness among students who then become intrinsically motivated to find solutions to newly faced learning situations or

problems. A minute reading of the following case studies will help in understanding the above discussions.

Case Study 1: Response Prevention

Response prevention means refraining from compulsions, avoidance, or escape behaviors. One 22-year-old woman felt compelled to spend 18 hours on the toilet. She tried to commit suicide four times. She had been suffering for 3 years. In the interview session, she selected Rabindra Sangeet “Alokereijharnadharay dhuiyeda/apnakeeilukiyerakhadhular dhaka...” (With thy fountain of light, cleanse my dirt-covered hidden self). The song reflects her own emotions and lifestyle. She was asked to sing the song repeatedly inside the toilet. Finally, she could control her duration in the toilet from 18 hours to 1 hour.

Case Study 2: Self-directed goal setting

Self-directed learners are individuals who set themselves clear goals, act upon plans, take initiative, are open to learning, and are motivated. Through the use of self-directed learning, students set their own goals and deadlines while following a broad assignment outcome. One 14-year-old learner suffered from over-learning, aversion towards writing, very poor academic performance on a regular basis, and apprehension of danger. Analysis of the layer dynamics showed that the reason for over-learning emerged from his desire to be a complete being, and the root cause of the problem lies in over-learning guided by extrinsic reading motivation. Motivating him intrinsically to study was selected as the target for change. His case history revealed that he could sing Rabindra Sangeet and play tabla as a part of his family tradition. On request, he sang “Jodi tare naichini go se ki amaynebe chine einabafalguner dine,” and was asked if his book would ask him the same question raised in the song (If I fail to recognise him, will he ever find me out?). He replied, quoting the lyrics, “Jaani ne” (I don’t know). After understanding how to be complete he said that henceforth he would do writing practice and learn to understand the topic. His academic performance improved significantly after that. Here the lyrics act as the catalyst to initiate the goal (writing motivation). The therapist did not suggest anything directly, but the song itself evoked self-awakening in the boy.

Case Study 3: Flow creation in consciousness

Rabindrik Psychotherapy theorizes the movement of particles or images in consciousness across its three layers. Here, consciousness is analogous to the ocean.

Like the oceanic flows, two types of flow occur in our consciousness, namely, laminar and turbulent flow. Usually, turbulent flow occurs in insight generation to solve the problem. During this time, an individual becomes anxious and stressed. In Rabindrik Psychotherapy, an individual finds a solution without creating much stress. Here, the role of the therapist is to create turbulent flows in the consciousness through Rabindra Sangeet.

Rabindrik Psychotherapy Research Institute Trust organized one workshop based on Rabindra sangeet in which the participants were school/college teachers by profession with an age group ranging from 25 to 50 years. They all knew a number of Rabindra Sangeet and other compositions by Tagore. But they were confined to singing a particular song from a fixed perspective only and were unable to position the song in other contexts or to mingle with other forms of creativity. Therefore, the free flow across the three layers of consciousness could not be created. They were asked to listen to a particular Rabindra Sangeet, “Antoromomobikoshito koro antorotoro he” (Let my soul evolve, o’ dearest, residing in the innermost core of my soul) and reflect on their individual thought process through a paper-pencil drawing while listening to the song. Surprisingly enough, each of the participants drew completely different pictures after their respective consciousnesses. In the following sessions, they were asked to suggest a title (excluding the terms used in the song) for their picture; to draw another picture based on the auto-suggested title and develop a story incorporating suitable Rabindra sangeet based on the picture; and to choose each other’s picture and develop stories incorporating suitable Rabindra sangeet based on the same. So many images, stories, and more Rabindra Sangeet emerged from just one Rabindra Sangeet. At the end of the workshop, participants learned how to create flows and unbind their consciousness to create harmony in their creation.

Case Study 4: Intrinsic Motivation

Ryan and Deci defined intrinsic motivation as “the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external products, pressures, or rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 56). In a teachers’ training college, it was found that some trainees (age-group ranged from 24 to 30)

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were reluctant to take part in both curricular and co-curricular activities and study individually, especially through rote learning, to get good grades, though performance was not satisfactory. They suffered from anxiety, stress, loneliness, etc. Analysis revealed that these students were highly dominated by extrinsic motivation. Studying to get good marks only confined their learning within the Murta Layer, so a sense of incompleteness and bound consciousness arouse agony. In a programme they were asked to listen to the Rabindrasangeet, “Anondodharabohichhebbhubone” (The universe is overflowing with the tune of ecstasy) and draw the image aroused in their consciousness by listening to the song. They were free to draw anything they liked, following their own thought process. It was found that all of the reluctant trainees drew from their own individual consciousness. They smiled, looked very relaxed and happy. They said that henceforth they would follow their own creativity along with study. Their academic performance reflected visible growth.

Teaching-learning challenges & pedagogy

Studies reveal that the majority of students and teachers across the globe experienced a forced transition from traditional classes to online ones with almost no preparation during the pandemic that converted homes into classrooms (Bayrakdar&Guveli, 2020; Kim, 2020; Prokes& Housel, 2021). Even teachers with prior experience of partial online teaching faced a challenge in shifting to a fully online mode (Sykes, 2020) based on digital tools and technology (Dhawan, 2020). Teachers’ roles have undergone almost a sea change during this time (Perkman&Tezci, 2011) from the traditional “chalk ‘n talk” based teaching approach to a highly technology-based virtual classroom transaction and helping students achieve their learning objectives in this new system (Yilmaz, 2021), thus posing a great challenge to the teachers.

Earlier studies reveal that only active participation and engagement of students in the teaching-learning process can facilitate learning as well as skill-development the most via online mode (Christmann, 2017). Thus, students’ active participation in technology-based online education systems becomes absolutely necessary to secure quality and durable education (Wang et al., 2018), academic performance (Northey, 2018), desired learning outcomes (Manwaring et al., 2017), and intensity and quality of participation (Azevedo et al., 2012).

Limitations of the existing pedagogy

However, during and after the lockdown, it was discovered that participatory teaching and activity-based learning could not be successfully integrated in the majority of cases, highlighting the need for more appropriate pedagogical approaches. Though modern pedagogies, as previously mentioned, attempt to engage students as active participants, they remain heavily reliant on the supervised model, which necessitates constant monitoring and intervention by teachers. Learners will never be self-sufficient and independent if they are constantly confronted with new situations and challenges during this period of transition.

In the existing pedagogy, prior hypotheses are formed regarding the syllabus and methodology. In such an artificial and imposed ambiance, students suffer from a lack of self-awakening, free expression, creativity, and an adequate stock of vocabulary. Even though they feel the urge for authentic self-expression, they are poorly evaluated for not conforming to the conventional system. All these are reflected in the students over dependence on traditional sources of knowledge. They rarely develop into responsible and independent learners capable of constructing their own knowledge and interpretations of life and the world. If they are to emerge as responsible, independent, and constructive learners, a self-awakening approach to the teaching-learning process must be integrated into the existing system.

To achieve sustainable educational goals, a self-awakening approach to learning should be introduced. The self-awakening approach refers to learning from within the self and offers a model based on unsupervised consciousness in teaching. This approach inhibits rote learning or surface-level learning. In this case, the teacher serves as a facilitator rather than a mere transmitter of knowledge, allowing students to construct their own knowledge and interpretation. To make the lesson sustainable, it should be associated with the flow of imagination. In the existing education system, the acquired knowledge remains at the Murta layer without any emotional attachment or manipulation. That’s why learning loses sustainability. In order to make it permanent, constructive, and sustainable, objects must be associated with imagination at the Raag layer that creates multiple colours in our consciousness. The rose is associated with several imaginative and historical events in this context. By repeated experimentations,

it becomes symbolised and moves to the Saraswat layer of consciousness, which is the seat of harmony with all the elements of the object and constructs symbols. The symbol represents the object. Utility value as well as the self-efficacy to regulate the object develops sustainability.

Strategies

Here we may have a comparison between the conventional classroom and the classroom facilitated by the self-awakening approach:

Conventional classroom	Classroom fostering self-awakening
Based on the supervised model of teaching-learning.	Based on the unsupervised model of teaching-learning.
Teachers are the transmitters of knowledge, mainly the task masters.	Teachers understand the locus of students' consciousness and facilitate the flow of consciousness accordingly.
Emphasizes basic learning skills.	Emphasizes problem-solving skills.
Curriculum is rigidly followed.	Curriculum is further explored following the principles of joy, freedom and creativity facilitated by Tagore's performing arts.
Learning materials include textbooks and workbooks mainly.	Materials consist of both primary sources of knowledge and also manipulative materials
Focus is on repetition of learning and revision.	Focus is on interaction, group discussion and encountering new situations to find a solution.
Conventional classroom settings are generally followed.	Performing art based creative ambiance is created to enable students for self-evaluation and overcoming the conflict in layer dynamics.
Test-based assessments are done to evaluate the achievement by students. Giving correct answers to the asked questions are given the most priority.	Assessments include tests and examinations as well as observing students' participatory activity, free flow of consciousness, independent construction of knowledge etc.
Students' individual work and performance is weighed the most.	Students' individual as well as group work and performance, and conflict management are equally valued.

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Conclusion

This study examined the self-awakening approach to learning using Rabindrik Psychotherapy postulate-based case studies. The self-awakening approach enriched by the postulates of Rabindrik Psychotherapy equips the learners with higher order thinking abilities, critical thinking abilities, deeper learning, mastery of content, problem solving skills, teamwork capability, communication skills, etc. at the cognitive level; enables the learners to have cognitive control over their emotions; develop a proper understanding of their own and others' emotions at the affective/emotional level; and helps the learners also in goal setting and response prevention. Because of the extensive use of Rabindra sangeet and other performing arts, this pedagogy is both auto-suggestive and real-time and object-oriented, guided by powerful positive metaphors. It promotes subjective well-being, reduces stress and anxiety, and liberates learners from unpleasant experiences, resulting in a harmonious learning experience. This pedagogical approach facilitates intrinsic motivation to study and develops innovative self-efficacy.

In the Indian context, it can be said that providing holistic and sustainable education has always been the aim of Indian education since ancient times. "The pursuit of knowledge (Jnan), wisdom (Pragyaa), and truth (Satya) was always considered in Indian thought and philosophy as the highest human goal. The aim of

education in ancient India was not just the acquisition of knowledge as preparation for life in this world, or life beyond schooling, but for the complete realization and liberation of the self (NPE, 2020, 4). Holistic education emphasizes the interconnectedness of education throughout life with the aim of lifelong learning by including liberal arts like music, dance, drama, etc. along with textbooks. NPE, 2020 also talks about sustainable and holistic education in this way: Education, thus, must move towards less content and more towards learning about how to think critically and solve problems, how to be creative and multidisciplinary, and how to innovate, adapt, and absorb new material in novel and changing fields. Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centered, discussion-based, flexible, and, of course, enjoyable. The curriculum must include basic arts, crafts, humanities, games, sports and fitness, languages, literature, culture, and values, in addition to science and mathematics, to develop all aspects and capabilities of learners and make education more well-rounded, useful, and fulfilling to the learner (Ibid. 3). Such education is not possible without incorporating a self-awakening approach to the existing pedagogy. Students are expected to perform better in cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements as they approach higher standards or classes..

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