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Development of Curriculum Concept and Gurukul Education System in Nepal

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the structure, characteristics, and educational impact of the traditional Gurukul education system in Nepal and compares it with the modern curriculum. The main objective of this research, conducted through library research method, is to reconsider modern education in the context of Gurukul-based ethics, discipline, and spiritual education. According to the research results, the Guru-Shishya tradition of Gurukul is found to have special emphasis on holistic development, moral teaching, and spiritual discipline. The Gurukul curriculum was flexible, orally transmitted, and deeply related to religious and philosophical education. When compared to the modern curriculum, Gurukul education seems to have placed more emphasis on character building and life experience, while modern education seems to focus more on academic achievement and structured knowledge transmission. According to the conclusion of this study, incorporating the moral values, personal guidance, and spiritual practices of Gurukul education in modern education can be helpful in enhancing the quality of education and overall student development. More action research is needed on this topic, so that the original teaching tradition can be integrated into the modern curriculum.

Keywords: Gurukul, Guru-Shishya Parampara, Curriculum Development, Spirituality

Background

Education is an essential part of human civilization that contributes significantly to social, cultural, moral and intellectual development. The history of the development of the education system in Nepal indicates the rich legacy of the ancient Vedic tradition and Gurukul education. Since the Vedic period, Gurukul education has been imparting education in ethics, spirituality, discipline and social responsibility (Pandey, 2065). The Gurukul education system was based on the Guru-Shishya Parampara, in which learners lived in Gurukuls and studied Vedas, philosophy, literature, grammar, Ayurveda, astrology, archery etc. along with life skills (Upreti, 2073). In Nepal, the formal concept of curriculum development has been evolving along with the educational institutional structure. The

Curriculum Development Centre under the Ministry of Education has divided the modern curriculum structure into three levels – General Secondary, Sanskrit Secondary and a separate structure has been provided for Gurukul education (Ministry of Education, 2079). This clearly indicates that Gurukul education has been officially given a place in the national education system.

Nepal's history seems to be very rich in terms of the historical development of the Gurukul education system. The first Gurukul is believed to have been established in 1751 B.S. from the Sanskrit School at Matihani, which was later expanded as Lakshminarayan Mahavidyalaya in 1801 B.S. (Gautam, 2071). The contribution of Gurukul education was not limited to just textual knowledge but focused on the transmission of culture, tradition, religion and philosophy of life. Such an education system contributed not only to the transfer of knowledge, but also to the development of character building and social responsibility. The curriculum structure included in the Gurukul education system was highly disciplined and spiritual, where along with the acquisition of knowledge, human values such as morality, modesty, service and meditation were practiced. Such values are disappearing in today's education. Therefore, there is a growing debate on the need to include Sanskrit education in the curriculum as a matter of necessity (Jha,2068).

In today's context, when the education system is giving priority only to employment-oriented objectives, Gurukul education provides a life-oriented approach. There is still a possibility that the Gurukul system, which conveys the message of spiritual peace, social harmony, and moral development, can be incorporated into modern curriculum development. In this context, the present article has studied the concept of curriculum development in Nepal and the historical, structural, and theoretical aspects of the Gurukul education system, and has attempted to explore its relevance and potential contribution to modern education.

Looking at the development of the education system in Nepal, it is found that the historical, philosophical, and moral aspects of the traditional Gurukul education system have been neglected. Due to the lack of moral values, culture, and spiritual education in today's formal education system, students have started to lack humanity, social responsibility, and moral awareness. In this context, the Gurukul system, which evolved from the Vedic tradition, has the potential to make a complementary contribution to today's education. However, the original idea and structure of Gurukul education are becoming weaker in today's curriculum development. Therefore, the rationale of this study is to explore the tradition of Gurukul education, curriculum structure, and its inclusive potential in the modern education system. Historical Development of Curriculum in Nepal

Objectives of the study

To explore the historical process and ideas of curriculum development in Nepal, to study the curriculum structure in the Gurukul education system, to analyse how relevant the features of the traditional Gurukul curriculum are in the context of modern curriculum development, and to identify the contribution and possibilities that Gurukul education can make in today's education system.

This research provides in-depth information about the role and possibilities of traditional Gurukul education in the context of education policy and curriculum development in Nepal. It can give a message that the Gurukul education system can be useful in restoring values, culture, yoga, meditation, and social responsibility in education. In addition, it can contribute to the revival and preservation of Sanskrit education and Vedic traditions. This study can become a reference material for teachers, policy makers, curriculum developers, and educational institutions.

Research Questions

How did the concept of curriculum development develop in Nepal?

What type of curriculum structure is found in the Gurukul education system?

How relevant are the curriculum features of the traditional Gurukul education system to modern curriculum development?

Research Methodology

A qualitative research method has been adopted in this study. Qualitative research helps in in-depth study of the experiences, cultural behaviours, and social environment of individuals. This research critically analyses historical documents, references to the Gurukul education system, and curriculum development materials used in the current formal education system. Comparative, interpretive, and historical approaches have been used in the context of the subject matter. A library study method has been used as an important source in this research. Library study is the process of collecting thematic information through the systematic collection and analysis of various types of available articles, books, educational policies, government reports, and research materials. In this method, the researcher works to prepare the basis of historical, theoretical, and current knowledge related to the research topic by systematically studying the primary written literature.

This study mainly studies Vedic and religious texts such as Vedas, Upanishads, Smriti, Dharmashastra and other Sanskrit literatures in depth. These texts provide a rich source of traditional background of Gurukul education and spiritual teaching methods. Similarly, the education policies of the Government of Nepal, the curriculum framework published by the Curriculum Development Centre, reports of past Education Commissions, and educational research articles have also been included under library study. These sources have helped in understanding the interrelationship of Gurukul education with the modern education system.

Under the library study method, the information collected has been systematically reviewed on the basis of thematic analysis, contextual interpretation, and thematic frequency. It has provided the necessary data to fulfil the objectives of the research by analysing the qualitative data in depth. Thus, library study has strengthened the research by providing a comprehensive theoretical and historical basis.

Document Analysis: Historical and contemporary educational documents have been

analysed. These include Vedic scriptures, Upanishads, reports of education commissions, curriculum guidelines, policy documents, research articles on Gurukul education and educational programs. This type of analysis has helped to uncover both the historical roots and the current situation of the subject.

Thematic Analysis method has been adopted to analyse the collected qualitative data. Using this method, recurring, important and original ideas were identified in the interviews and documents. They were coded and categorized into major themes—such as: value education, discipline, spirituality, traditional structure, comparison with the modern education system, etc.

The main themes obtained from thematic analysis have been studied in depth and conclusions related to the objectives of the research have been drawn. The researcher's critical perspective and impartiality have been ensured in the interpretation of qualitative data. The information obtained from documents and interviews has been stored and used securely. All sources used in the study have been properly cited in a scientific and ethical manner, which maintains the credibility and transparency of the research.

Findings

The Gurukul education system has been famous as a rich education system in Nepal since ancient times. In this system, the education process was based on a systematic structure and it has some key features that make it unique. The structure of the Gurukul education system was mainly developed on the basis of the traditional relationship and discipline between the Guru and the disciple.

Guru–Shishya Tradition

The foundation of the Gurukul education system was based on the deep traditional relationship between the Guru and the disciple. The Guru acted as a protector and teacher and transmitted knowledge, culture and moral values to the disciple. The Guru–Shishya Tradition was a process of not only providing academic education, but also providing guidance in all aspects of life. It was considered important to impart knowledge of the values and beliefs of life to the disciple from a social, cultural and religious perspective (Singh, 2012).

Curricular Structure

The curricular structure of the Gurukul education system was mainly based on the Vedas, Upanishads, Shastras and other religious texts. In this system, the disciples studied mainly in Sanskrit language and were made proficient in the subjects of religious texts, scriptures, yoga, meditation, literature, mathematics and logic. Its aim was to make the disciple not only academically competent, but also to help in the overall development of the personality (Thapa, 2014).

Discipline, Morality, Spirituality

Discipline, morality and spirituality were the key elements in the Gurukul education system. The disciple had to follow discipline in his personal life and imbibe moral and spiritual values as per the guidance of the Guru. In this system, importance was given to the overall development of the disciple's personality, which included moral conduct, lifestyle and meditation practices (Bhandari, 2016).

Stages of Education

In the Gurukul education system, the process of education was specifically divided into four major stages:

Literacy Stage: At the age of five, children were taught the basics of writing and reading.

Upanayan Ceremony: The disciple was initiated into Vedic education through the Upanayan Ceremony.

Study of Vedas: The disciple would begin an in-depth study of the Vedas and Upanishads.

Graduation Ceremony: After the completion of education, the disciple would leave the protection of the Guru and would be reintegrated into the society through the Samavartan Sanskar (Sharma, 2013). Comparative Reflection with Modern Curriculum

There are some important similarities and differences between the Gurukul education system and the modern curriculum development. The modern education system aims to provide value education, life skills education and inclusive education, which is evident when compared to the ideals of Gurukul education.

Personality Development, Inclusive Education

The Gurukul education system focused on the overall development of the personality. The disciple did not only acquire academic knowledge, but his mental and spiritual development was also important. The emphasis in the modern education system is on inclusive education and personality development. is given, which has a curriculum structure designed to provide equal opportunities to students of all castes, religions, and classes (Bhattarai, 2020).

Discipline and Conduct-Focused Curriculum

In the Gurukul education system, education was given by prioritizing the discipline and conduct of the disciple. The disciple was given the opportunity to improve the morality and conduct in his personality. Various exercises and classes are also included in the modern curriculum to provide discipline and moral education to the students (Sapkota, 2019). The importance of the Gurukul education system is also relevant in today's education system. The importance of its value-based education and morality is still strong. Incorporating some of its features in today's education system can help in the overall development of the students.

Value-based Education, Life Skills Education

Value education and life skills education were important parts of the Gurukul education system. The disciple was taught about religion, ethics and social responsibility, which helped in the overall development of his personality. The modern curriculum has also acknowledged the importance of value-based education and life skills (Dixit, 2017). Value-based education was a key feature of the Gurukul education system. This system gave importance to morality and religion, which made the students responsible citizens of the society. Today's education system also gives importance to providing value-based education (Adhikari, 2021).

Yoga, Meditation, Morality, and Conduct

In the Gurukul education system, the practices of yoga and meditation helped in the mental and physical development of the disciple. Today's education system also incorporates practices that focus on mental health and holistic development (Shrestha, 2018).

Discussion

This research presents findings based on the structure, characteristics, comparison with modern curriculum development, and theoretical perspectives of the Gurukul education system. The development of Nepal's education system and curriculum is very important in a historical perspective. Over time, there have been many changes in the education system and curriculum of Nepal. During the Lichchhavi, Malla, Shah and Rana periods, the structure of education and curriculum developed according to the needs of the society. If we examine the historical development of the education system in Nepal during different ruling periods, a clear change from ancient to modern is visible.

During the Lichchhavi period, Nepal had an education system that was a blend of Buddhist and Hindu cultures. During this time, the curriculum was based on religious, philosophical and cultural education. During the Malla period, importance was given to the study of poetry, music and scriptures. Only members of the royal family and upper class people could get education. The influence of Western education and the English language began to increase during the Shah period. During the Rana period, the education system was still more formal and limited to the privileged class. During this time, the limitations and content of the curriculum were based on ancient religious texts and the administrative needs of the empire.

In Nepal, after 1951, various efforts have been made to reform the education system. After the democratic revolution in Nepal in 1951, significant reforms began in the education sector. With the end of royal rule, education reform programs were initiated. The first National Education Commission was established in 1951, whose objective was to improve the basic structure of the school system and curriculum across the country. After this, many important steps have been taken in the development of the curriculum through various commissions and committees.

Various National Education Commissions have been formed in Nepal for curriculum

development. The National Education Commission of 1951 revised the structure of the education system of Nepal and brought forward plans for the primary, secondary and higher education sectors. The main objective of this commission was to bring the entire education system of Nepal into an integrated and scientific framework. In the report of this commission, priority was given to modernizing the curriculum and providing affordable and quality education in Nepal (Government of Nepal, 1951).

Subsequently, the National Education Commission of 1971 and the Education Reforms Commission of 1992 played a significant role in curriculum development. These commissions suggested curriculum reforms to make the education system of Nepal relevant and relevant to the times, which proposed appropriate teaching methods to ensure the economic, social and cultural progress of the entire nation (Chhetri, 2015). With the influence of the Lichchhavi, Malla, Shah and Rana periods in the historical development of the education system of Nepal, significant curriculum reform steps have been taken by various education reform commissions after 1951. These reforms have made progress towards making the education system of Nepal modern and progressive.

This study has conducted a comparative study of the relationship, structure and characteristics between the Gurukul education system and the modern curriculum. The results of the study have clarified the value of the ancient Gurukul system and its potential contribution to modern education today.

First, the main feature of Gurukul education is the Guru-Shishya tradition which was found to emphasize not only knowledge but also morality, spirituality and discipline. It focused on the holistic development of the student, which seems to have been given less importance in modern education. This is consistent with other research (Chhetri, 2006; Rai, 2012) which suggests that the character of the Gurukul system is considered central to moral and spiritual education.

Second, the curriculum of the Gurukul system was traditional and oral, in which the student had the opportunity to learn directly from the Guru. This promoted depth of knowledge and experiential learning. The modern curriculum, on the other hand, is mostly paper-based and structured, which is not able to fully cover the individual development of the students. This study also adds the need for value education, life skills, and holistic development in modern education, which is also confirmed by the research of Dixit (2018) and Shrestha (2016).

Third, the emphasis on discipline and conduct in Gurukuls seems to be less effective in today's schools. But studies have shown that modern education also needs to re-emphasize the disciplinary aspect, so that students can become socially and morally responsible (Bhattarai, 2015).

This study provides insight into the relationship between the Gurukul education system and the modern curriculum, and shows new possibilities in developing an integrated curriculum of values and spiritual education. It can play an important role in balancing

tradition and modernity in the education sector of Nepal.

Structure and characteristics of the Gurukul education system

Guru-Shishya tradition: The soul of the education system was the Guru-Shishya relationship, where the Guru was not only a source of knowledge but also provided moral, spiritual and practical guidance. Discipline, faith, and personal guidance were its mainstays (Chhetri, 2006). The curriculum in Gurukul was based on experiential and oral transmission. Education focused on the Vedas, philosophy, logic, yoga, music, and art (Gautam, 2009).

Discipline, ethics, and spirituality: Gurukuls were not only centers of knowledge but also centers of moral discipline and spiritual development. Students practiced regular worship, meditation, celibacy, and self-reliance (Rai, 2012). **Value-based and practical education:** The core feature of Gurukul education was value education. Although there have been attempts to incorporate it in the modern curriculum, it has not been fully established. There is a trend towards including yoga, meditation, and moral education (Dixit, 2018). **Emphasis on personal and holistic development:** The modern education system seems to focus on academic achievement and professional development, while Gurukul education aimed at total human development. The inclusion of socio-emotional education shows proximity to the Gurukul tradition (Shrestha, 2016).

Lack of discipline-centred curriculum: Although discipline and moral behaviour are taken into account in the current education system, it seems to be limited to a subject-centred structure. Behaviour, conduct, and discipline were given equal place in Gurukul education (Bhattarai, 2015).

Comparison with the theoretical concept of curriculum

Tyler's view: Tyler's concept that the curriculum should be goal-oriented, structured and assessable provides the basis for modern curriculum development (Tyler, 1949). Gurukul education gave priority to process and relationships.

Bruner's view: Bruner's "spiral curriculum" theory is consistent with the "repetitive practice" and "gradual orientation towards deeper knowledge" trend of Gurukul education (Bruner, 1960).

David Carr's view: Carr sees the curriculum as a moral, social, and value-based educational endeavor, which is consistent with the moral and social consciousness of Gurukul education (Carr, 2003)

The Gurukul education system has had a long-term profound impact on the South Asian cultural environment, including Nepal. This system is known to give priority not only to academic knowledge, but also to morality, spirituality and social virtues. The Guru-Shishya tradition in Gurukul emphasizes personal relationships in the learning process, which has a strong impact on discipline, self-control, respect, and character building in students. Since it strives to develop the complete personality of the students, it is also worth evaluating

in today's competitive society. However, since the educational methods in Gurukul system are traditional and oral, there is a lack of modern technology and scientific approach. However, its spiritual and moral aspects have the potential to complement the modern education system.

Comparison of Gurukul with Modern Curriculum

There are some important differences and similarities between Gurukul and modern curriculum. Gurukul education was value-based, focused on character building and holistic development, while modern curriculum is mostly focused on academic competence and professional goals. Gurukul's Guru-Shishya relationship prioritizes personal guidance and self-realization, while modern curriculum considers structured classroom, book and technology-based learning as the mainstay. However, the current modern curriculum seems to have started to include spiritual aspects such as value education, life skills, yoga and meditation, which is re-addressing the influence of Gurukul education. It states that an effort is needed to strike a balance between the philosophy of Gurukul and the modern education system that incorporates the strengths of both and helps in the holistic development of the student.

Conclusion

There is a possibility that the deep moral, spiritual and disciplinary aspects of Gurukul education can be re-absorbed into the modern curriculum. Although the modern curriculum has clarity in structure, assessment and educational objectives, the aspect of building human character and culture seems weak. It seems necessary to integrate the values of Gurukul tradition into the modern curriculum to build a holistic education system. This study has highlighted some important findings through the structure, curriculum concept, and comparison with the modern curriculum of Nepal's traditional education system – especially the Gurukul education system. The major findings are as follows:

Centrality of the Guru-Shishya relationship: In the Gurukul system, education was not just the transmission of knowledge, but a set of life skills, conduct, and self-development. This relationship is lacking in today's formal, textbook-centric education. The role of discipline and ethics: Along with studies in the Gurukul, a lifestyle based on regular worship, meditation, restraint, and service-mindedness was developed in the students. Such practices are included to a limited extent in the current curriculum. **Curricular flexibility and holistic approach:** Gurukul education was flexible, person-centred, and based on holistic development, which is different from the subject-centred, assessment-oriented trend of the modern curriculum.

Gurukul education is in some respects consistent with the curriculum theories of Tyler, Bruner, and Carr. In particular, Carr's moral education and Bruner's "spiral learning" approach are close to Gurukul practice. The potential of Eastern knowledge in the modern curriculum: The current curriculum has begun to include elements such as life skills, value education, yoga, meditation, which indicate a revival of some aspects of the Gurukul

tradition.

Recommendations

To make the current education system more holistic, morally and spiritually rich, some useful aspects of the Gurukul education system can be included in the modern curriculum based on the following recommendations. It is necessary to improve the training program and school culture to expand the relationship between teacher and student not only within academic boundaries but also as a life guide. Ethical education, yoga, meditation, mindfulness can be emphasized in the national curriculum by making it mandatory in all classes and emphasizing the internal development of students. According to Bruner's "Spiral Curriculum" theoretical framework, the practice of repeatedly restructuring the same subject at different levels can be adopted. Vedic philosophy, Sanskrit literature, Eastern logic and philosophy of life can be developed as optional subjects or integrated courses. Incorporating practical aspects of the Gurukul education system (discipline, service, spirituality) in teacher preparation programs can develop ethical and inspiring teaching techniques.

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