

Gandhian Values and Character Building in NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes holistic development of learners through value-based, experiential, and competency-driven education. One of its core aims is character building, which includes ethical reasoning, constitutional values, empathy, responsibility, and social awareness. Long before such policy articulation, Mahatma Gandhi had envisioned an education system rooted in moral and spiritual development through his concept of Nai Talim. Gandhi regarded education as a means of character formation rather than mere acquisition of knowledge. This paper examines the alignment between Gandhian values and the framework of character building in NEP 2020. It highlights the convergence between Gandhi's ethical philosophy—truth, non-violence, self-discipline, dignity of labour, and social service—and NEP 2020's emphasis on ethical education, human values, and holistic personality development. The study concludes that Gandhian philosophy provides a strong moral foundation for implementing value-based education in NEP 2020.

Key Words: *NEP 2020, Gandhian Values, Character Building*

INTRODUCTION

Character building has always been a central aim of education in Indian philosophical traditions. From ancient Gurukul systems to modern educational reforms, education has been seen not only as a tool for intellectual development but also as a means of shaping moral and ethical behavior. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 marks a significant reform in Indian education by emphasizing holistic development, ethical values, constitutional morality, and life skills. It recognizes that education must go beyond academic knowledge and focus on developing responsible, empathetic, and socially conscious citizens. Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy, particularly Nai Talim, strongly aligns with this vision. Gandhi believed that "education is the all-round drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind, and spirit." For him, character building was the highest aim of education. This paper explores how Gandhian values are reflected in NEP 2020's approach to character building.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sarkar (2020) critically examines the concept of character building from a Gandhian perspective and highlights that modern Indian education policies have historically underemphasized moral and spiritual development. The study argues that Mahatma Gandhi placed character formation at the center of education, considering it more important than literacy or academic achievement. According to the author, Gandhian education is rooted in truth, non-violence, and ethical discipline, which are essential for developing responsible citizens.

The study further critiques earlier educational policies for neglecting the integration of values in formal education systems. It suggests that although NEP 2020 makes efforts toward value-based education, full implementation of Gandhian ideals is still lacking in practice.

Verma (2024) analyzes NEP 2020 and emphasizes its strong focus on **value-based and holistic education**. The study highlights that NEP 2020 aims to integrate constitutional values, ethics, and human development into the curriculum at all levels of education. The policy promotes experiential learning and social-emotional development as tools for character building. The author notes that NEP 2020 aligns indirectly with Gandhian philosophy by emphasizing ethical education and social responsibility. However, the study also points out that implementation challenges such as lack of trained teachers and infrastructure may hinder effective value education delivery.

Sahoo and Sahoo (2024) explore the relevance of Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy in the context of NEP 2020. The study finds strong conceptual similarities between NaiTalim and NEP 2020, particularly in areas such as experiential learning, vocational education, and social responsibility. The authors argue that Gandhi's emphasis on self-reliance, dignity of labour, and community-based education is reflected in NEP 2020's multidisciplinary and skill-based framework. They further suggest that Gandhian philosophy can enhance the effectiveness of character building by providing a moral foundation to policy implementation.

Khatoon (2025) examines NEP 2020 from the perspective of value education and highlights that the policy aims to promote empathy, respect for diversity, and emotional intelligence among learners. The study emphasizes that value education is integrated into curriculum design through experiential methods such as storytelling, group discussion, and community engagement. The author also notes that NEP 2020 attempts to develop students as socially responsible individuals, which aligns with broader Gandhian ideals of moral citizenship. However, she identifies challenges such as lack of structured assessment mechanisms for character development.

Singh (2025) provides a conceptual analysis of Gandhian philosophy in relation to modern education reforms, particularly NEP 2020. The study highlights that Gandhi's educational thought emphasizes holistic development of head, heart, and hands, which is strongly reflected in NEP 2020's multidisciplinary and experiential learning framework. The research also identifies differences, noting that Gandhi's education system was primarily value-driven and morally oriented, whereas NEP 2020 also incorporates economic and employability goals. Despite this, the study concludes that Gandhian philosophy remains highly relevant for strengthening ethical education in India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the concept of character building in NEP 2020.
2. To examine Gandhian values in educational philosophy.
3. To analyze the relationship between Gandhian ethics and NEP 2020.
4. To explore the relevance of Gandhian values in modern education.

CHARACTER BUILDING IN NEP 2020

Meaning: Character building refers to the development of ethical, emotional, and social qualities in learners, enabling them to become responsible citizens.

NEP 2020 Provisions for Character Development: NEP 2020 integrates character building through:

- Value-based education
- Constitutional values (justice, liberty, equality, fraternity)
- Ethics and human values in curriculum
- Social-emotional learning
- Experiential and service-based learning
- Holistic Progress Card focusing on personality development

Expected Outcomes

- Development of ethical reasoning
- Increased empathy and social responsibility
- Reduction of rote learning
- Formation of well-rounded individuals

GANDHIAN VALUES IN EDUCATION

Mahatma Gandhi's educational philosophy is deeply rooted in ethical and moral values.

Truth (Satya): Truth is the highest value in Gandhian philosophy. Education should cultivate honesty and integrity.

Non-Violence (Ahimsa): Gandhi emphasized peaceful coexistence and non-violent behavior as essential life values.

Self-Discipline: Education must cultivate self-control and moral discipline.

Dignity of Labour: Manual work is equally important as intellectual work. This builds respect for all professions.

Self-Reliance (Swadeshi Spirit): Learners should become independent and self-sufficient.

Service to Society: Education should produce socially responsible individuals committed to community welfare.

CONVERGENCE BETWEEN GANDHIAN VALUES AND NEP 2020

Holistic Development: Both NEP 2020 and Gandhi emphasize development of the whole personality—intellectual, emotional, physical, and ethical.

Ethical Education: NEP 2020 integrates ethics and human values in curriculum, similar to Gandhian moral education.

Experiential Learning: Gandhi's "learning by doing" is reflected in NEP 2020's experiential and activity-based learning.

Social Responsibility: Both frameworks promote civic responsibility and community engagement.

Respect for Labour: NEP 2020's emphasis on vocational education aligns with Gandhian dignity of labour.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Strengths of NEP 2020 in Character Building

- Inclusion of value-based education
- Emphasis on emotional intelligence
- Focus on experiential learning
- Integration of ethics into curriculum

Limitations

- Lack of clear implementation mechanisms for value education
- Overemphasis on skill development may dilute moral focus
- Teacher preparedness for value-based education is limited
- Assessment of character development remains complex

Gandhian Contribution

Gandhian philosophy provides:

- A strong ethical foundation
- A practical model of value-based education
- A focus on inner transformation
- A balance between knowledge and morality

Thus, Gandhi fills the philosophical gap in NEP 2020's implementation framework.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Schools should integrate Gandhian values in daily teaching practices.
2. Teachers must act as moral role models.
3. Curriculum should include life skills and ethical reasoning.
4. Community service should be made part of education.
5. Evaluation should include behavioural and value-based indicators.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- NEP 2020 strongly supports character building through structured policy provisions.
- Gandhian values provide a deep moral and philosophical foundation.
- There is significant convergence between NEP 2020 and Gandhian thought.
- Effective implementation requires stronger emphasis on value education.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Gandhian values and NEP 2020 share a common vision of education that goes beyond academic achievement and focuses on character formation. While NEP 2020 provides a modern policy framework, Gandhian philosophy offers timeless ethical guidance. The integration of both can lead to an education system that produces not only skilled individuals but also morally responsible citizens. Therefore, Gandhian values remain highly relevant for strengthening character building in the NEP 2020 framework.

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