



EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARS

When being asked to take part in this project I was excited to delve deeper into my own heritage and find theories and scholars that influence education in South Asia. What I actually found is many similarities to theories here in the UK and Europe, in fact I was able to make so many links to Froebelian practice, Reggio Emilia, and Margaret McMillan's ideas. I found that South Asian theories may have already been influencing European practices way before we realised.

What I found was that South Asian philosophy looked at bringing together the body, mind and soul/spirit. These ideas are in contrast to many practices which want to separate each of these things and focus on education as something for the mind. Only now are we beginning to understand the importance of a holistic approach to education coming full circle to the ideas that have been shared by South Asian philosophy for many, many years.



Whilst researching I became increasingly frustrated as I was unable to find sources that were translated by people from South Asia. Most of the translations I found were from German professors who were interested in studying India in the early 1900s. I was reminded that the world wasn't separate at this time and in fact there were many trade routes and movements between Europe and South Asia. We need to be aware of being critical readers and reflecting on what information we consume. We have to think about the number of layers that are added to this project – translation, colonisation and then our own layer of an educational lens to the philosopher's work.

The scholars that have been chosen come from a range of time periods, have various routes into education and their own influences (including colonisation). I'm excited to see where these short pieces of information take you in discovering new ways of thinking about education. I hope that you find connections to what you already know and find a way to reaffirm or build upon what you already practice.

Rachna Joshi

RABINDRANATH TAGORE



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rabindranath Tagore (1861 – 1941) was a writer, philosopher and social reformer. He was born in Calcutta, India into a family well known for leading social, cultural, religious and educational changes during the 19th Bengal Renaissance.

The family home was busy. Tagore lived with thirteen siblings as well as his extended family who were all free to explore and learn as they pleased. Surrounded by his family, all of whom had varying interests in subjects such as the arts, mathematics and science, Tagore developed a love of person centred learning. This influenced his theory on education.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S WORK

Rabindranath Tagore believed that education should focus on children's immediate and greater world/environments. His curriculum was heavily influenced by the natural world and the seasons of the year.

We have come to this world to accept it, not merely to know it. We may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy. The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence. But we find that this education of sympathy is not only systematically ignored in schools, but it is severely repressed. From our very childhood habits are formed and knowledge is imparted in such a manner that our life is weaned away from nature and our mind and the world are set in opposition from the beginning of our days. Thus the greatest of educations for which we came prepared is neglected, and we are made to lose our world to find a bagful of information instead. (Tagore)

Rabindranath's curriculum encouraged innovation on an individual level as well as communities working together to explore common goals/interests.

When learning about History, rather than studying war, children explored historical and current barriers within society, culture and religion. He also observed how the arts support the development of empathy, meaningful and fulfilling relationships, and connection to our cultural and natural worlds and so the arts were an incredibly important part of children's education.

REFLECTIONS ON RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S WORK

How do you connect children with
the rhythms of nature and the
seasons of the year?
What impact do you think this has?
For them, and for you?



How do you feel about artistic and
creative activities? What
opportunities do they provide for
children to connect, deepen
relationships and develop
empathy?



In what way could you include
opportunities for children to explore
being in tune with themselves and
each other?



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