

A Comparative Study of Early Childhood Curriculum of Waldorf Schools V/s Maharashtra State Board Schools

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Abstract

Stem Cell Biologist, Dr. Bruce Lipton, who is also an advocate of holistic living says, 0 to 7 years are the most formative ones in the life of an individual. He also says that most of our subconscious programming happens during these years. Keeping this in mind, a number of factors come into play that lead to the healthy overall development of an individual - nutrition, parenting and education being the most important of all. This paper focuses on education as an important factor in the holistic development of a child.

Education in India, has been conventionally inclined for the longest time and mainly focuses on academic pursuits. While an academic focused curriculum is indeed useful for higher educational pursuits, when we speak of early childhood education, a more holistic and alternative approach would lead to the all-round development of a child that includes physical, mental, emotional and social development. This paper explores the how's and why's of it, by comparing conventional curriculum with alternative curriculum of students between ages 3-8.

Keywords: *Early childhood, Education, Alternative, Holistic, Conventional, Curriculum*

Background

According to the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), early childhood is the period of conception until a child is 8 years of age. This period is a crucial one, during which the brain develops the fastest and is most responsive to change. Early childhood includes 4 major stages:

1. Conception to birth
2. Birth to 3 years
3. 3 to 6 years

4. 6 to 8 years

Each of these stages requires age-appropriate development. When children are well nurtured and cared for in their earliest years, they will be able to fully develop their language, thinking, emotional and social skills, making them more productive as adults. This is because, like the famous stem cell biologist and Epigenetics expert Dr. Bruce Lipton his book, 'The Biology of Belief', rightly says that it is the mind that controls the body, and is made up of two parts the conscious mind and subconscious mind. While the conscious mind is the creative mind with our identity, our subconscious mind is something like a tape recorder that stores programs and keeps replaying those programs in the form of behaviors again and again. The subconscious is the non-thinking habitual mind from which we operate 95 percent of the time, and the other 5 percent, from the conscious mind. So where do these programs come from actually? For the first seven years of a child's life, the conscious part of the brain does not primarily function. EEG tests show a child's brain below the age of 7 functions at a very low level, known as the theta level. To simply put it, a child below the age of 7 grows up observing its environment just like a television camera, which records everything, thereby making everything it observes as part of its subconscious programs. And it is these observations that make up the subconscious mind of a child.

Therefore, we see the importance of early childhood as the foundation for the development of a healthy, happy child. Speaking of 'healthy', the World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as, "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Going by this definition, we see that health is a holistic concept that includes more than just being physically fit. When we speak of health and early childhood, a well nurtured and cared for environment that would essentially include a supportive family system, healthy and happy community experiences, proper nutrition and health care as well as the right kind of learning opportunities is key. The term, '*proper learning opportunities*', here refers to an all-rounded development of the child which would include the development of different quotients like:

1. Intelligence Quotient (IQ): Formulated and hypothesized by psychologists Alfred Binet and William Stern, respectively, this is considered as one of the most important quotients, as it plays a crucial role during the whole life of an individual. Universally, IQ is understood as the 'pace of understanding the subject concerned and the retention power of the accumulated contents.'

2. Emotional Quotient (EQ): Psychologists Micheal Beldoch and Daniel Goleman were the ones whose studies gave birth to the term 'emotional quotient'. This quotient deals with the ability of an individual to recognize their emotions as well as that of others, distinguish between different feelings and see them appropriately. It also includes life skills like *self-awareness* under which come emotional awareness, self-assessment and self-confidence; *self-regulation* that includes self-control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability and innovativeness; *self-motivation* which includes drive, commitment, initiative and optimism; *social awareness* which includes empathy, service orientation, developing others; and *social*

skills which include influence, communication, leadership, change management, conflict management and cooperation.

3. Social Quotient (SoQ): Postulated by psychologist Edward Thorndike, it was later reinvented by psychologists like Howard Gardner and Daniel Goleman. Gardner proposed that there are multiple intelligences, out of which he talked about two important ones *intrapersonal intelligence* and *interpersonal intelligence*. According to him, interpersonal intelligence includes sensitivity towards others' moods, feelings, temperaments and motivations; and ability to work well in groups.

4. Adversity Quotient (AQ): Commonly called the art of resilience, the adversity quotient was proposed by Paul Stoltz in 1997. This quotient measures the ability of a person to deal with and respond to adversities in life-based on a person's attitude, level of mental stress, perseverance, longevity, learning and their responses to changes in the environment. People with a good adversity quotient think out of the box, especially when faced with challenges.

5. Spiritual Quotient (SQ): This quotient allows an individual to operate beyond their cognitive and emotional skills. It prompts one to think intuitively. It also helps a person think of their role in the grander scheme of things and what they could offer humanity. The term saw its beginnings in Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall's first book, *SQ: Connecting with Our Spiritual Intelligence*. They describe SQ as 'our most fundamental intelligence. It is what we use to develop our capacity for meaning, vision, and value.

Literature Review

There hasn't been much literature directly concerning comparative studies between the Maharashtra State curriculum and Waldorf Curriculum in early childhood education. This is why, for this paper, my literature review spanned from early childhood to Maharashtra State level curriculum and went on to explore the world of Waldorf. Each of these will be spoken of in the text below.

Early Childhood Development and Learning

For this paper we started with Dr. Bruce Lipton's, (Ph.D., Cellular Biologist, Epigenetic specialist), book, 'The Biology of Belief', that spoke about how in the first two years of a child's life, the child's brain is predominantly in the delta EEG wave state, which in scientific terms means the person is asleep. However, in terms of the mind, it means that the child is merely observing the world and taking in all it sees, without having an opinion on the same. In the words of Dr. Lipton, it is more like, "a child behind a play-glass window". From the ages of 2-6, a child's brain is predominantly in the theta EEG wave state. In this state, the child mainly lives in their imaginary world. But more than that, a child during this phase of their life, unknowingly lives in a hypnotic trance, as even in hypnosis, the brain is in theta state. At this point of time, everything the child observes, is downloaded by the subconscious mind in the form of programs. He also goes on to say, that these programs cannot be automatically created, they have to be given or passed on (most people do so unknowingly) to a child, by either parent, caregivers or anyone in close association with the child. And it is only after the ages of

6 or 7 that a child's brain is in alpha state and that is where the child starts consciously expressing themselves. Dr. Susan Johnson's article titled, 'Teaching our Children to read, write and spell', also gave us a scientific perspective on different phases in a child's life and brain development and function at each of these stages.

For this study, we also explored a paper titled, 'Five Quotients', by Bhavyadeep Bhatia from International Journal of Latest Technology in Engineering, Management & Applied Science (IJLTEMAS) and the online website Socialigence. This paper and site spoke about the five different kinds of quotients that make up for essential life skills. These quotients are intelligence quotient, emotional quotient, social quotient, spiritual quotient, and adversity quotient. The reference materials spoke about how these quotients can enhance different aspects of life, and make an individual a 'whole'.

Maharashtra State Level Curriculum

From the different reports on mscret.org, we understood the history, roles, and functions of the Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training. Through their document titled, 'Primary Education Curriculum 2012', the contents of the curriculum were understood. And although formally primary classes span from Grade 1 to Grade 8, in this paper only the curriculum up till grade 4 was looked at. Throughout the study, it was noticed, that the curriculum places a lot of emphasis on textbook learning and writing, from an early age. Most concepts, be it math or geography-based, are taught to children from textbooks. And while they do have art and music, not much importance is given to the same, thereby allowing us to conclude that more emphasis is given to theoretical learning as compared to practical learning. However, upon researching the National Education Policy of 2019, it was good to discover that this new policy focuses on gradual and more progressive learning especially from the ages of 3 to 7. In chapter 1, it says that studies in cognitive sciences have now proven that children before the ages of 8 learn best that through 'play-based, activity-based, and discovery-based multilevel flexible styles of learning and interaction'. And when this phase has been transitioned from, i.e. once they are 8 years old (grade 3), they gradually start adapting to a more prescribed style of learning. This is an indicator that now the teaching-learning process can move to a more formalized one. This may be done with the help of basic textbooks. However, a strong play and discovery-based approach of teaching-learning must continue. The draft also spoke of reducing curriculum content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking, to promote the holistic development of students, especially in their early years.

During the literature review for State-level education, grade 9 and 10 textbooks titled, 'Self Development and Art Appreciation', published by the Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research, Pune (MSBTPCR), were also reviewed. These books aim to guide adolescents about important life skills needed for self-development and a successful balanced life. They also emphasize the importance of art appreciation, which has a strong role to play in different facets of human life. The textbooks were very pictorial and also included games and activities.

Waldorf Curriculum

A lot of literature was found concerning the Waldorf curriculum. To begin with, we looked at the history and philosophy from the Rudolf Steiner online archive and e.

library as well as from the Waldorf Education website. Through these sources, it was understood how Steiner's anthropocentric approach had its roots in the Bhagavad Gita and the Vedas. Through several different articles and reports from the Waldorf Research Institute and other such related sources, the benefits of different Waldorf activities and methods of learning were understood. In the paper, special emphasis has been given on story-telling and art (in various forms), since these are the two tools widely used as part of this curriculum.

Objectives

This paper has been written to:

- To understand the differences between the State level and the Waldorf curriculum, respectively.
- To understand how each of these curriculums contributes to the overall development of the child.
- To recommend the State level curriculum developers to include activities and learning experiences that enhance a child holistically (IQ, EQ, SoQ, AQ, SQ), to produce more well-balanced individuals that are well in tune with their emotions and needs, as well as the needs of the society.

Methods and Procedures

This paper uses interviews and information collected from a practicing psychologist, an art therapist and Waldorf educator, a kindergarten (former) Waldorf teacher, a Waldorf teacher trainee, a grade 4 Waldorf student, a State-level high school teacher, a State-level kindergarten teacher, and an International Baccalaureate Drama teacher, in order to compare and understand the differences, strengths and weaknesses of the State level curriculum and the Waldorf curriculum, respectively. It also uses information procured from credible online sources such as articles and reports.

Early Childhood Education and the Individual

While the parents are the first teachers of the child, the educational institute a child belongs to, also has a large role to play, considering that children spend a major part of their day in school. This is where new experiences are formed, through learning and interaction. Therefore, preparing a child in all aspects of life (holistically), also becomes the responsibility of the educational institute, keeping in mind the long term goal of producing well-balanced individuals and on the whole, well-balanced citizens. To understand a little more about the importance of holistic child development, we spoke to Ms. Paulomi Pandit, a practicing psychologist who specializes in marital relationships, wellness and preconception counseling - where she prepares parents for childbirth & parenting. She is also the founder of Kcrafting Lives and Psychologist and here is what she has to say on the development of a child with regards to conventional and holistic curriculums:

“Conventional curriculums that already exist in most of our schools, focuses majorly on IQ, performances, how a student has scored, how much a student understands a concept and so on. When we speak about something holistic we are not speaking of academic development, we are speaking of all-round development. And by all-round we are not speaking of sports and other extra-curricular activities. We are talking of life skills like

how to deal with different kinds of people how to be more tolerant with differences that people have especially considering that we live in a secular country, how to identify and deal with one's own emotions, how to empathize with others, and so on. These aspects are covered in the emotional quotient, social quotient, adversity quotient, spiritual quotient, and the likes. Very often these are considered to be fancy, new-age modern terms. But in reality, these are basic requirements and life skills which we often neglect.

When we speak of a successful person, we very often look at just one aspect of their life that is successful. However, the true definition of success is good financial health, good physical and mental health, a fulfilling family life, a healthy relationship with self, as well as a well-balanced social life. In addition to that, the person should be well adjusted in society. And even when such a person is faced with the ups and downs of life, he can handle it well. This is true meaning and a rather holistic definition of success. Very often we see successful businessmen, who during adversity go into depression and sometimes even commit suicide. This is a clear example of a lack of coping skills and lack of life skills and reflects a lower emotional, social and spiritual quotient. When we speak of life skills when should these life skills begin? It ideally should start from school and at a very young age. This is because the sooner we are exposed to these skills, the easier it becomes for us incorporate it into our daily lives. However, this does not mean that as an adult, one cannot acquire these life skills. But would it not be easier to have a building that has a strong foundation, rather than break a building and then reconstruct it? In other words, building the right kind of life skills in children from an early age would be the ideal thing to do rather than equip them with these skills once they've grown. This is because it is easier to build subconscious programs in children as compared to adults who have several filters. The endowment of such life skills will ensure that we will have better adults who can contribute better to society on the whole. And while many schools with conventional state curriculum do have value education as well classes like religion and morals, 'do these topics help us learn basic life skills?' is the question to be asked."

On this note, we will now move on to explore in-depth the kind of curriculums a conventional state-run school incorporates, versus, the alternative curriculum incorporated by a more holistic kind of school like Waldorf. We will also go on to see how each of these curriculums contribute to the holistic development of a child.

Maharashtra State Board Curriculum

The Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training (MSCERT) is the institute of highest stature in the state of Maharashtra, concerning providing academic support and improving the quality of Primary Education. It comes under the Department of School Education of the Government of Maharashtra. This body was initially established during the period between 1964 and 1965 as a State Institute of Education (SIE). Later, in the year 1984, it was renamed as Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training. Some of the duties of MSCERT are as follows:

- A primary function of MSCERT is that of Curriculum Development and implementation, where it reviews, restructures and develops primary curriculum. It acts as an advisor to State Government on educational matters and

also undertakes and promotes educational research to improve the quality of school education.

- As part of its functions, MSCERT also organizes orientation programs to create awareness among students about things like Population Education, Women Empowerment, Human Values, and Environment Education.
- It also organizes long and short term teacher training courses for teachers, teacher-trainers and other important instruments in the field of school education. MSCERT also plays an important part in developing teaching-learning material for teachers and teacher-trainers.
- It exercises complete academic control over the District Institute for Education and Training as well as keeps a regular check on their progress.

Although its host of functions are vast, owing to the nature of this paper, we shall focus solely on the curriculum formulated by MSCERT. To do this, we shall go step by step from grade 1 to grade 4 and understand the subjects they have as part of their curriculum as well as the method of teaching.

Subjects & Teaching Methodology

Grade	Subjects	Teaching Method
Pre-school & Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alphabet writing• Numerical writing• Poems• Phonetic sounds• Animal identification• Reading• Numeral spellings• Spelling of words• Short sentence formation with pictures• Drawing• Coloring• Finger painting• Basic conversational skills• Exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Audio-visual tools• Charts• Writing• Reading to students• Play• Story-telling• Chalk & board method• Songs and dance

Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Marathi • Mathematics • Work experience - Computers Art and Craft • Physical education • Value Education/ Religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart board lessons Chalk and board method • Field trips • Mathematics lab • Practical show and tell lessons • Story telling
Grade 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Marathi • Mathematics • Work experience - Computers Art and Craft • Physical education • Value Education/ Religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart board lessons Chalk and board method • Field trips • Mathematics lab • Practical show and tell lessons • Story telling
Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Hindi • Marathi • Mathematics • Environmental studies • Work experience – Computers Art and Craft • Physical education • Value Education/ Religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart board lessons Chalk and board method • Field trips • Mathematics lab • Practical show and tell lessons • Story telling
Grade 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Hindi • Marathi • Mathematics • Environmental studies I • Environmental studies II • Work experience – Computers Art and Craft • Physical education • Value Education/ Religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart board lessons Chalk and board method • Field trips • Mathematics lab • Practical show and tell lessons • Story telling

Additional skills (**individual schools choice**) Music, Navnirtmiti Math tools (Mathematics & Plugs, Jodo blocks, 3D Jodo, Place Value Kits, Digit Cards, Geotiles, Safari games, Number lines, Ganit racks, Currency games, etc.) and Language Labs from grades 1-4.

WALDORF CURRICULUM

Waldorf education is based on an Anthroposophic approach and is the spiritual-scientific brainchild of the Austrian scientist and thinker **Rudolf Steiner**, who believed that a human being is a three-fold culmination of spirit, soul, and body (holistic). He was the founder of Anthroposophy, which is the path of inner development or in other words, spiritual research. His foundation of Anthroposophy was deeply rooted in the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. He has even authored a book titled, 'The Occult Significance of the Bhagavad Gita'. In the book, Steiner referred to Vedic terms like 'atman' and 'brahman'. It was his dream to take this philosophy across the world. However, as a visionary, he realized that taking this philosophy to the west, in its purest form would be a block in his path, as the western world would not be able to relate to it. And it was out from this dream that was born the first Waldorf School in September 1919, in Stuttgart, Germany. This was also the beginning of the Waldorf School Movement, and a more practical approach to take Steiner's spiritual beliefs to the world. As part of this philosophy, he gave practical indications for almost every field of human endeavor. Art, architecture, drama, science, education, agriculture, medicine, economics, religion, care of the dying, social organization – he touched almost every field of human life. Based on his teachings, the Waldorf curriculums are formulated keeping in mind the individual as a whole. The Waldorf education sequence includes kinesthetic activities, oral language presentations, lesson imaging and artistic and imaginative activities that help in the holistic development of an individual. To shed a little more light on how art as a practice helps in the all-round development of the child, we spoke to Ms. Vanashree Ghate, Founder and Director of Holistic Expression and Abilities for Living (HEAL) and Educator for Anantaraa ABT Course. She is also a well-known Waldorf educator in Mumbai. With regards to art, Ms. Ghate says, "One is less-informed if they think that by doing art one isn't using their intellect. This is because even in the simplest piece of art you still have to apply your intelligence and logic to figure where the sun should appear. And if one indulges in more complex art, all the more intelligence is required. And then the interpretation of the art also comes into play, which also helps develop intellect. Research has also proved that there are areas in the brain that cannot be connected by logic and language. Those areas can only be evolved by working with the arts. And art doesn't necessarily mean visual art. To be more a little more specific, Waldorf has something called, 'Seven Lively Arts'. These include drama, drawing, movement, music, modeling, painting (nature-related colors), and speech.

Handwork is also an important part of the curriculum and includes knitting, crocheting, and the likes. These activities help with mind-body connect as well as helps with left and right brain hemisphere coordination. Then there is form drawing, which is based on the Indian art of rangoli. Unlike other art forms, in form drawing the artist is not shifting the paper, which compels other spatial abilities to adapt since the artist isn't

moving the paper. This has a ripple effect in other areas of life where if the child is faced with something challenging, he learns to adapt and be flexible, thereby making the best of the situation. This also helps with the development of the emotional and social quotient of the child. It also enhances intelligence, since, in form drawing, the child has to logically plan how he is going to complete the drawing without moving the paper. Waldorf curriculum doesn't make use of pencils in either art or their academic curriculum. The whole idea of this being, each color brings out a separate emotion. When students write in their main lesson book, using only colors, as it shows how strongly founded their overall emotional quotient is. I say this because, if a child is feeling low, without even the teacher telling him, he will use brighter colors to write, as those bright colors help him cheer up. And this happens instinctively. The teacher does not direct the child with a choice of colors here. This also signifies freedom of choice to think for oneself, thereby also promoting independence, while getting the job done. Conventional curriculum, on the other hand, looks at creating uniformity among children, where everything has to be the same. This restricts the free flow of ideas, thoughts, and creativity.

Waldorf classifies children based on 4 temperaments, which are **sanguine** (optimistic, active and social), **choleric** (short-tempered, fast or irritable), **melancholic** (analytical, wise and quiet), and **phlegmatic** (relaxed and peaceful). Since Waldorf is a child-centric curriculum, the teacher identifies which temperament (each one of us has a predominant temperament) is dominant in which child and operates accordingly. This helps individual connectivity between students and teachers. Regular curriculum, on the other hand, doesn't consider this, and caters to many children at a time, without keeping in mind their type of temperament. Also, the Waldorf curriculum works on a three-fold approach, i.e. thinking (intellect), willing (action) and feeling (emotion). It says that every action starts in the mind and unless the mind feels like doing something, the action does not take place. Every aspect of the Waldorf curriculum, including the arts or science is led by this three-fold approach. For eg: if students are studying Pythagoras, they study his life, along with studying the concepts he's postulated. This turns even a dry subject into a rather interesting one. Waldorf is therefore based on the holistic meeting of child, i.e. by meeting the child where he is. And how does one do that? By understanding that every child is a three-fold human being, every child has different temperaments and by using the seven lively arts following these understandings. In short, Waldorf looks at each child as an individual."

Sloka was India's first Waldorf school that began in Hyderabad in 1997. On that note, we will now have a look at the early childhood Waldorf curriculum.

Subjects & Teaching Methodology

Grade	Grade	Teaching Method
Pre-School & Kindergarten	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling • Puppetry • Creative play • Singing • Eurhythmy (movement) • Games and finger plays • Painting • Drawing • Beeswax modeling • Baking and cooking • Nature walks • Languages • Circle time for festival and seasonal celebrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairytale • Dance and music • Drawing • Coloring (with nature based colors) • Pot lucks • Puppetry • Verses • Marionettes
Grade 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaginative stories • Exploring nature • Music • Language (English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Regional language) • Handwork (knitting, crocheting) • Painting • Drawing • Sport • Mathematics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairy tales and nature stories • In language, letters and the phonetics are discovered through stories and drawings of the images from the story • Through imaginative and tactile tools, students are introduced to the four processes in math (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division) • Flute • Choral recitation • Nature visits to experience the rhythm of the seasons observed through the senses

Grade 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drama • Poetry • Painting • Drawing • Mathematics • Nature study • Handwork (knitting) • Language (English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Regional language) • Flute • Saint stories • Sport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairy tales and nature stories • A language curriculum rich teaches students about the lives of the saints with the help of fables • Basic arithmetic operations are expanded and multiplication facts are learned through rhythm and movement • Painting • Drawing • Modelling
Grade 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical farming • Gardening • Building shelters • Drama • Music • History • Language (English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Regional language) • Mathematics (Long division, mental arithmetic) • Measurement • Grammar • Time • Handwork (cross stitch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories and practical situations on how different walks of life mutually support one another • Farm visits where students work with animals and work closely with growing crops and vegetables. As part of their Farming block they make 3 trips to a farm where from sowing to reaping, cooking and consuming the food they have grown • Measurements are taught with the help of stories like Noah's Ark and other such stories, as well as by measuring crop growth • Shelter and house-building is done through the teacher's spoken word and the child's direct experience • Math includes cooking, telling time with the help of sundials and sand clocks as well as with the use of

		<p>money</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories, that help students on their own inner journeys, are heard, written, and illustrated • The diatonic flute or recorder becomes part of their music lessons
Grade 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human and animal studies (zoology) • Geography • Mathematics (Long division, fractions) • Geometry • Composition writing • Violin • Language (English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Regional language) • Handwork (cross stitch) • Dance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History and Geography are taught to the student with reference to their physical location on the planet Earth • Zoology is taught human relationship to the animal world with the help of Zoology • They are taught values and how to differentiate between good and evil through Norse mythology and stories from Mahabharata • They are taught fractions with the help of stories that also helps in laying a foundation for higher math and abstract thinking skills. • In music, the child's musical individuality is encouraged by allowing them to sing parts in canons and rounds • Students are also taken to visit important sites in their cities as part of their Home Surrounding block

COMPARISON

From the above-mentioned texts, we are clearly able to see that the conventional state curriculum seeks to create uniformity not just in its way of working, but also among students. And most often than not, they fail to realize that each child is different and learns differently. And while the subjects they offer is important to enhance the learning and knowledge of a child, 'learning' is what the state curriculum mainly focuses on.

That there are other aspects to a human being that make them a whole, is completely overlooked. Activities that enhance a child's emotional, adversity, spiritual and social quotient are almost completely overlooked. Further probe into the conventional state curriculum also led us to understand that very many students belonging to this curriculum tend to rote learn concepts and theory, thereby creating a block for long term learning and remembering. This style of learning later on ripples into higher education, where students (not all, but most), are highly dependent on notes, study mainly with scoring well in their exams as the goal, instead of having a thirst to learn and understand concepts. It is also noticed that as soon as they leave the examination hall, a few days later all they've studied tends to be forgotten (consciously if not subconsciously). And this is speaking from personal experience as a degree college teacher. The above-mentioned style of student learning is clearly reflective of the teaching style of this particular curriculum. Students are rarely made to wear their thinking caps. On the contrary, the printed textbooks they use kind of direct their thinking in 'a' particular way. Speaking of textbooks, a little more research led to the knowledge that the Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research, Pune (MSBTPCR), has published a book titled, 'Self-Development and Art Appreciation', for grade 9 and 10 students. And while these books covers topics like personal identity, empathy, goal setting, analytical thinking, self-management, handling emotions, decision making, conflict resolution, leadership, art awareness, expression, sense of aesthetics, the application of art in daily life, etc. there are three drawbacks that were noticed during this study. The first being, this kind of knowledge and awareness should ideally be passed on to children when they are in their early school years (early childhood), rather than at ages 14 onwards, where they've already developed a number of thinking patterns. However, better late than never. The second drawback that was noticed was that as soon as one mentions the word 'textbook' the entire concept of practical learning loses its essence, as theoretical learning then takes over. Concepts such as art, handling emotions, facing adversity, thinking out of the box, imagination, visualization, etc. can hardly be learned from a textbook. And the third drawback was that it was noticed that these textbooks were created in a pictorial format, the kinds that children in their early years of school have. Rather than having some real-life case studies that the adolescents could relate to, this book looked more like it was created for elementary school students. A recent interview with a grade 10 teacher of a State curriculum-based school, who wished to maintain anonymity, when asked whether students from grades 6-10 come with any of the above-mentioned quotients, apart from IQ, said that apart from their intelligence and social quotient, they are low in most of their other quotients. She also went on to say that most students and their parents are very often solely focused on whether or not the child has done well in their exams. This clearly tells us how the State level mainly focuses on results and ranking.

The Waldorf philosophy believes that childhood is made up of three distinct stages which are divided roughly into seven years each—birth to 7 years (early childhood), 7 years – 14 years (middle childhood), and 14 years to 21 years (adolescence). When we look at the Waldorf curriculum, it is observed that competition is replaced by cooperation. Children from early on are introduced to the seven lively arts, that include activities like puppetry, eurhythmy, cooking, baking, circle time, drama, storytelling

and so much more. While these activities to someone who is used to the conventional style of teaching and learning, may seem like ones that do not add much long term learning to children, the opposite is actually true. **Storytelling**, which is an integral tool in the Waldorf curriculum is an extremely powerful tool that helps with so many areas of development. It entertains, brings history to life, depicts role models, explains abstract intangible concepts, it connects generations, teaches values without lecturing. However, one of its most potent benefits is that it enhances creativity and imagination, thereby transporting the listener. This causes our brains to experience similar emotional responses like that of the characters in the story and thereby respond to similar real-life situations with a lot more empathy. Therefore, storytelling leads to a sharpening of one's emotional quotient. And at Waldorf, stories are used to teach subjects like math, language, history, geography, and the likes. Therefore, along with learning concepts, this develops other life skills simultaneously. **Cooking** is another activity that students are introduced to early on. To the normal eye, it may seem like students are just learning a basic skill. But on a subtle level, what students are actually learning is reading, measuring, math, following directions, collaboration, listening, problem-solving and sharing. This enhances their IQ, SQ as well as AQ. And while **drawing** enhances a child's motor skills and thinking skills, **gardening and nature walks** to connect with nature enables children to become more mindful and contemplative. In kindergarten, the colors used for painting are sourced from nature, thereby also making children environmentally conscious. **Handwork** in the form of knitting and crocheting, play an important part in relation to other things taught in the school. In Stuttgart (1921) Steiner said: "When we teach a child to knit or to make something—of course the things he makes must have purpose and meaning—we are then working upon the spirit of the child, and often more truly so than when we teach him subjects that are generally thought of as spiritual and intellectual." Thereby, knitting enhances the spiritual quotient of the child. Knitting also requires the complete attention of the individual doing it, which also brings about mindfulness in the knitter and in this case, the child. Due to its overlapping nature, knitting also strengthens the connection between the left and right hemispheres of the human brain. Then there is drama which is also part of the Waldorf curriculum. **Drama** also plays an integral role in developing emotional intelligence among children. Ms. Aishwarya Kulkarni who is a drama and theatre teacher at the Visual Arts Department of BD. Somani School in Mumbai, says that drama helps with self-awareness and self-management (who I am) and social-awareness and relationship-management (what I do). Questions around these concepts are generally asked during character building in drama. Even role plays in drama are very useful to allow emotions to flow, especially suppressed emotions. This is especially beneficial for those who aren't good with emoting. Therefore, subtly if not directly, drama as a form of art does play a role in enhancing emotional intelligence. She goes on to say that drama also enhances the adversity and intelligence quotient of an individual. This is because, while on stage, apart from acting, an individual needs to have the presence of mind about how to tackle a situation in case something goes wrong, thereby sharpening one's problem-solving skills. She also thinks that due to the nature of drama, that requires teamwork, group discussions, feedback, understanding, and acceptance of the individualistic nature of group members, it also enhances one's social quotient. This is especially good for people who are introverts. And unlike

mathematics that looks for specific answers, there is no right or wrong in drama and it is exactly this non-judgmental and accepting quality of the art that allows for the free flow of creativity and expression, thereby promoting the quality of self-confidence among drama group members. **Eurhythm** is a kind of harmonious movement, where the teacher guides the students to perform slow graceful movements through exercises, patterns and games that increase in complexity as they grow. The whole goal of eurhythm is to make visible the inner meaning of language, by dancing out any word or sentence. Such movements bring about harmony and relaxation to the child while stimulating spatial awareness and mindfulness, thus bringing about a deep connection with oneself that is considered nothing short of a spiritual experience. The concept of **Circle Time** that has its roots in the North American Indians is not really a subject, but rather a teaching strategy where the teacher and students sing songs together, recite verses, use movement, and do finger plays. ‘Ring-around-the-rosie’, which we played as little children, would be the perfect example of this. Circle time is a perfect social skill enhancer. Apart from that it also helps with listening skills, fine and gross motor skills, brain development, language, math facts, as well as memorization, thereby making learning fun. Circle time as an activity also helps children develop trust and learn the importance of trust as a virtue, owing to the fact that most discussions within the circle are kept confidential.

A few things to note about the Waldorf curriculum apart from its distinct style of teaching is the fact that class sizes are small, so that individual attention may be given to each student. Also, Waldorf teachers stay with the class from the about the first to the third grade, and continue with them to the sixth grade whenever possible. This continuity of class and teacher allows for a learning community with a strong foundation. Teachers also observe students and make detailed reports for each child. At Waldorf, a child is only allowed into first grade, when he is about 6 and a half or 7 years of age. Children are also not taught to write until age 7. This is because, according to Steiner’s philosophy, before age 7, stories filled with pictures of archetypes like those in fairy tales, and other stories, can help a child to weave something intangible into life, with the power of their imagination. At Waldorf, children in grade 1 are taught the alphabet by connecting them to pictures (either while drawing or by showing them pictures), stories, and sounds. For example, a child can see, in between a drawing of a house the letter H. This makes the child curious about alphabets, but gradually, thereby making learning more fun rather than task based. No reading (sentences) is required in Waldorf schools until grade 2. To explain this more scientifically, we referred to Dr. Susan Johnson’s, article that says, “Children should be only taught to write, read, and spell when their neurological pathways for writing, reading, and spelling have fully formed. From around three to seven years of age, children are myelinating the right sides of their brains, so they only have access to this right hemisphere of their brains for reading. The right brain can only read individual words by sight recognition or sight memory. So preschool and kindergarten-aged children have to use this developing, right frontal area of their brains to guess at words. Yet the right frontal area of the brain has a much more important task than trying to figure out words by sight. Children need the frontal area of their right brains (and eventually the frontal area of their left brains) to create and analyze mental pictures when they are listening to stories or reading books

for themselves. If children have to use the frontal area of their right brains to recognize words by sight, this area of the brain is not free to create inner mental pictures and scenes associated with the words they are hearing or reading. Furthermore, it is the myelination of the left side of their brains, usually around 6 and a half to 7 and a half years for girls and at least another year or two later for boys, that enables children to hear the separate sounds within a given word, (i.e. phonemic awareness) and string the individual sounds together to sound out words phonetically. True reading happens when children can form and create mental pictures in the frontal areas of their right brains, while simultaneously sounding-out phonetically the corresponding words using the left side of their brains. It is the formation of these mental pictures while reading that gives children a deep comprehension and enjoyment for what they are reading.” It is also worth noting that children at Waldorf do not have exams until grade 7.

Therefore, we notice how the Waldorf curriculum does not promote rote learning, which is why it does not lend textbooks to students. Teachers, however, do use textbooks for their understanding of concepts and information, and in turn come up with creative methods to teach the same to children in a way that the concepts are well-ingrained in their minds. And along with learning concepts, students also learn values attached with these concepts. For e.g. harvesting teaches students the importance of food as well as values like independence, empathy for those producing our food, etc. The day at a Waldorf school begins with the main lesson, that goes on for about 2 hours and subjects are studied in blocks, where the teacher teaches the same subject for about a period of 2-3 weeks. This helps the student completely immerse in the subject, thereby following the natural rhythm of learning, strengthening the understanding of the subject, and ingraining it into the subconscious, which learns best by repetition. To sum it up, the Waldorf curriculum focuses on the process of learning, in a more holistic manner.

DRAWBACKS

Nothing can ever be perfect, and should it be, then that leaves no scope for growth. On that note, let us take a look at a few drawbacks of both, the conventional State and the Waldorf curriculum, respectively.

Through the study, the following drawbacks were noticed with regards to the conventional **State curriculum**:

- It predominantly focuses on academia through evaluation. This is an indicator that the curriculum focuses mainly on developing the IQ of the child, instead of focusing on its holistic development (EQ, SQ, SoQ and AQ).
- The curriculum also does not give much importance to art and music
- The curriculum stresses the use of textbook learning, which in turn hinders the spirit of research, both among students and teachers.
- The practice of giving students study material in the form of ‘notes’ is encouraged. This promotes rote learning, thereby pushing the students to focus more on content, rather than concepts, which makes knowledge temporary.
- Students are very often burdened with homework. This practice takes away playtime (which enhances EQ, SQ as well as AQ, by exposing them to non-controlled real-life

situations) from a students' day. This in turn, does not teach them the importance of work-life balance. Apart from that, students mostly just 'do' the homework for the sake of getting the job done.

- This curriculum follows the 'one size fits all', principle' and tries to create uniformity among students more often than not. This restricts the creativity of students and they fear they might be an odd man out, by having a different opinion on things.

Just like in the conventional State curriculum, the **Waldorf curriculum** also has its limitations. A few of these are:

- Owing to the high fee structure in Waldorf schools, there is a lack of socio-economic diversity here. A former kindergarten teacher of a Waldorf school in Mumbai who wished to stay anonymous had the same to say.
- Since, at Waldorf schools, students have the same teacher for 7 years, an attachment with the teacher is developed. If a teacher leaves in between, there could be adjustment issues on part of the students with the new teacher. Also, if students have an ineffective teacher, then this could be a huge drawback for the next few years.
- Very often an indirect religious influence is found in the curriculum.
- The Waldorf curriculum doesn't cover relevant socio-political topics, which may not be a necessity. But awareness is always good.

Recommendations

This paper has a few recommendations to present with regards to the State level and the Waldorf curriculum, respectively. In the course of study for the paper, it was noticed that IQ enhancement is given a lot of importance, in the State level curriculum. Therefore, it is recommended that the State level curriculum developers' start looking at the child more holistically, or in other words as a 'whole'. And with that in mind, they introduce experience-based learning activities (in their already existing curriculum), which along with IQ, also enhances EQ, SoQ, SQ, and AQ of a child. This recommendation has also been given by the National Education Policy, 2019. It is also recommended that unlike the 'Self-Development and Art Appreciation' (MSBTPCR) textbook that is introduced to students as late as grades 9 and 10, they introduce art, music, other holistic concepts, and practical learning experiences into their early childhood curriculum instead.

With regard to the Waldorf curriculum, it was noticed that due to its high fee structure, there is a lack of socio-economic diversity among students in Waldorf schools. With that in mind, it is recommended that Waldorf schools in India work out their fee structure in a way that children from all strata of society are able to enjoy the learning experiences provided by this brilliantly thought and rolled out the curriculum.

Conclusion

As we have seen in this paper, early childhood is a time when a child's mind is like freshly applied concrete – ready to take any shape and form we give it. Therefore, it is not just the role of the parents to be conscious in their upbringing, but it is also the role

of educational institutes to ensure that the kind of learning experiences a child has in their formative years, develops them holistically. It is necessary for an educational system to teach children ‘how’ to think and not ‘what’ to think, thereby enabling them to become more independent and resilient adults. This not just helps them in their personal lives, but also empowers them to understand who they are, their likes, dislikes, etc. Apart from helping them develop into all-rounded successful adults, a holistic kind of education empowers children to be in touch with their true selves, thereby enabling them to also make the right choice when it comes to higher education, and not just choosing a run-of-the-mill kind of education or career. After all, like the visionary Aristotle once said, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” Work on the whole and the sum of its parts fit in like a perfectly completed puzzle.

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