

An Empirical Inquiry of Sri Aurobindo's Ideological Implications in Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE)

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ABSTRACT: A poet, thinker, philosopher, guru, nationalist, and educationist, Sri Aurobindo has contributed in many more forms to the society. He advocates that kind of education in which all the potentialities to fulfill the needs of country. Sri Aurobindo emphasized education should be in accordance with the needs of our real modern life. There are various concept and ideas related to education which are reflected in his ideological insight. It is an effort to explore all the ideas and thoughts related to education in school settings. Therefore, Researcher has selected Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry, India, for exploring the reflective practices of ideological insight of Sri Aurobindo. It is an empirical inquiry to analyze the ideology of Sri Aurobindo and investigate that this ideology creates a distinctive environment and regulate functions of the institution. For this purpose, researcher has prepared a semi structured interview for the administrator/principal/senior teacher etc. keeping in mind the ideology and institutional or school activities i.e. academics, co-curricular activities, extra-curricular activities, school, and community relationship. Based on these dimensions, researcher has also prepared an institutional profile in the light of Aurobindo's ideology.

Key Terms- Ideological Insight, Ideological Implications, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE)

INTRODUCTION

Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of education is based on the principle of evoking the potential of the individual in all its entirety, which should be developed according to human nature. Free Progress Education is based on the assumption that a human being is good in himself, and that positive freedom is a pre-requisite to helping children by allowing them space to experiment and providing opportunities for growth. As The Mother says, 'A free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development'. Free progress is 'a progress guided by the soul and not subjected to habits, conventions or pre-conceived ideas' (The Mother's, 1956). According to The Mother's (1956), education, in order to be complete, must contain five principal aspects relating to the five principal activities of the human being: physical, vital or affect-related, mental, psychic and spiritual. This concept of education is totally dependent on ideology of Integral Yoga and aims to develop a human being in to superhuman.

Keeping in mind the ideological insights of Sri Aurobindo, the Mother started a small school in 1943 gradually expanded in the following decade to become the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE). Inaugurated in 1952, the centre of education currently has around 400 students, with classes ranging from kindergarten to college level. It seeks to provide an integral education for its students by encouraging the development of all the parts of their being – mind, life, body, soul and spirit. Its method of teaching is a combination of direct instruction by the teacher and a 'free progress system' in which the student pursues his own course of study with the teacher's help. All students take part in the daily physical activities organized by the Physical Education Department. A dedicated group of instructors known as captains give training in athletics, gymnastics, aquatics, games, combative sports and asanas.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There have been a lot of studies conducted in order to analyze the educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Lal, M. (2013), Saini, A. (2017), Sarkar, N. (2018), Lalitha, S. (2018), Banerji, D. (2018), Dhar, U. (2019) and Bhonde, P. (2019) and many more have attempted to investigate the relevance of educational philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in modern context and other aspects/dimensions and these studies are kind of philosophical studies.

This study is an empirical inquiry in which researcher has attempted to investigate the ideological insights of Sri Aurobindo within the educational settings. This study has tried to explore the hidden treasure lies in the ideology devoted deeply to education and institutions built to materialize his dream.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. Does the Ideology of Sri Aurobindo create distinctive atmosphere and regulate functions of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE)?

OBJECTIVE

1. To Analyze the Ideology of Sri Aurobindo.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

• Ideological Implications of Sri Aurobindo:

In this research paper, the term ideological implications means, the reflections of ideological insights of Sri Aurobindo on the whole educational process i.e. aims of education, means of education, principles of education, purpose of education etc.

- **Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE):**

This term means, Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE), Pondicherry, India, which is running under Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, India.

METHOD AND APPROACH OF STUDY

The study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. All the information and data were analyzed by applying qualitative approach of research.

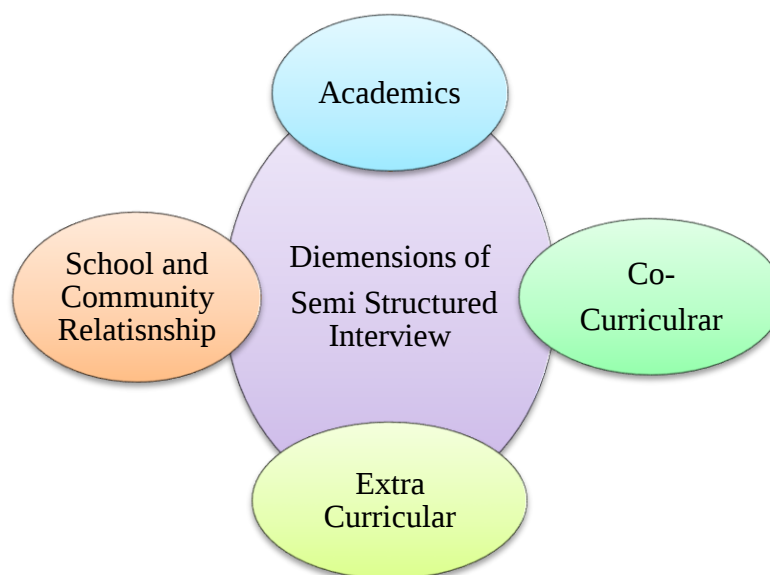
METHOD OF SAMPLING

Researcher has applied purposive method of sampling for the selection of institution.

TOOLS

Keeping in mind, the research question and objective of this research, researcher has prepared a semi structured interview. Researcher has also done a keen non-participatory observation for better understanding of ideological implications of Sri Aurobindo in school practices. The dimensions of semi structured interview have shown in following figure.

Figure No – 1
Dimensions of Semi Structured Interview



METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Researcher has interviewed Administrator/Teacher/Principal of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE) and transcript and analyzed all the responses of Administrator/Teacher/Principal dimensionally.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Researcher has gone through all the responses and analyzed thoroughly according to the dimensions and components of the Interview. Researcher has prepared and asked few questions from designates and analyzed all the responses. A detailed institutional profile has created by the researcher under the dimension of academics, co-curricular activities, extra-curricular activities and school and community relationship.

ACADEMICS

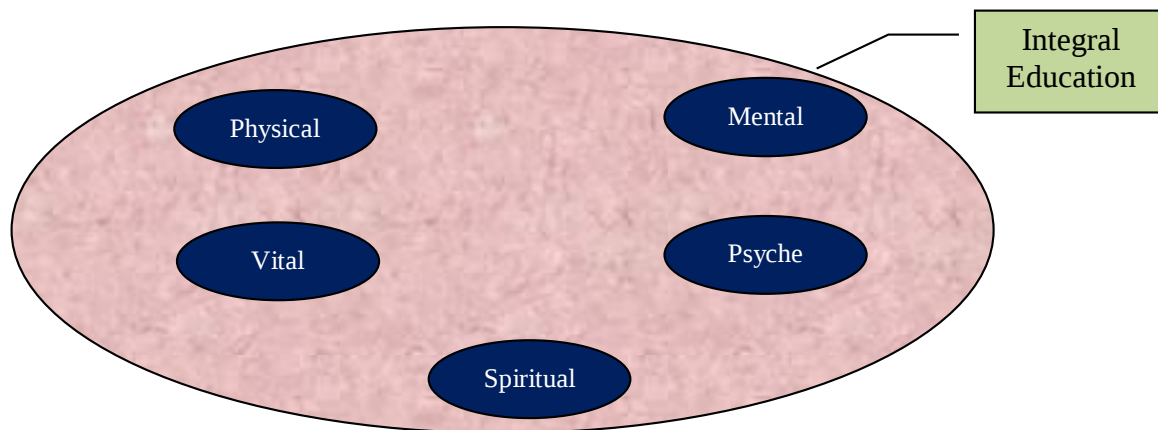
Researcher has included Ideology or Philosophy of the Institution, Aims and Vision of Institution, Pedagogy and Instructional and Teaching Learning Material in this dimension because of effective analysis of ideological reflection of Sri Aurobindo on academic activities in SAICE. Researcher prepared few items on the basis of above components and asked from designates of SAICE.



IDEOLOGY/PHILOSOPHY OF SAICE

Researcher has found that SAICE basically emphasis on the concept of Aurobindo's Integral Education, where education is given in environment of complete freedom. The different aspects of Integral Education i.e. Physical, Mental, Vital, Psyche and Spiritual are addressed properly in SAICE. In this institution, child is helped to grow according to their guidelines to attain self-perfection and become conscious of oneself. They believe that learning with joy is basic element in education of child and it is not concern with success and failure. The main components of 'Integral Education' are given below in figure-

Figure No – 2
Components of Integral Education



AIMS AND VISION OF SAICE

In SAICE, Education is not about so much stress on mental development but is to help the child to grow integrally as possible. SAICE focuses on the basic educational principles-

- A human consciousness, awareness and knowing and the knowing world around
- The whole idea of education in the SAICE is 'Nothing Can Be Taught', it means knowledge should not imposed externally.
- SAICE believes that knowledge is there inside, the being of child and this is the teacher's responsibility, to help students to develop it joyfully.

The Mother said that the only aim of education is 'Joyful Learning'. It is the joy of discovering oneself. The knowledge that is there. They believe that the major aim of education is all round development of child in free environment. Education is mean by which SAICE arrive at awareness of perfection of the whole need, where perfection means best development of all parts, aspects of body and emotions and aspects of mind utmost.

SAICE is not concerned with competitive space in society rather they focus on encouragement of how to think about own life.

PEDAGOGY

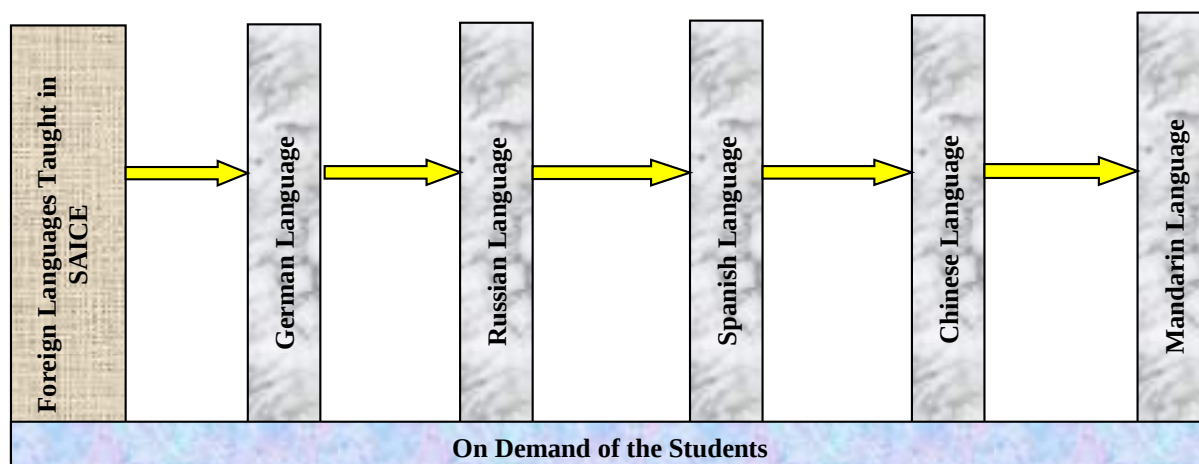
There is no formal specific structured strategy. In SAICE, there is no distinction between co-curricular and extracurricular activities. They believe that all the activities are essential part of educational activities i.e. physical education us equally treated as other subjects, equal space is given for study of philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

In SAICE, structure of pedagogy follow sequence among subject's presentation during school tenure from primary to upper classes-

- Firstly, they introduced with French and Sanskrit, with teaching of mother tongue
- Most activities are done French medium
- English is introduced at class 2
- 3 years are given to Kindergarten, instruction medium is French and during Sanskrit classes, Sanskrit language is used even in discussion
- Sanskrit is taught by story-telling conversation method

So, in this way in SAICE, almost 8-9 languages are taught apart from Sanskrit because of students in SAICE, came from different parts of India and they will be able to know their culture and literature. Freedom is to learn other Indian languages. At college level, there are various foreign languages are also taught on demand of the students-

Figure No – 3
Foreign Languages Taught in SAICE



INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL/TEACHING LEARNING MATERIAL

In SAICE, all kinds of teaching and instructional materials are available i.e. Encyclopedia, Textbooks, and other related resources. Each section of SAICE, has its own library. Most of teachers in SAICE emphasis on self-prepared material and, they use textbooks. Teachers are also digital material and audio-visual etc.

PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

In SAICE, developing personality is based on the way of doing things. The development of personality is done through the study of literature and study of all subjects in SAICE. They also believe that Physical Education activities plays the essential role in developing personality of students because of students can learn through Physical Education-

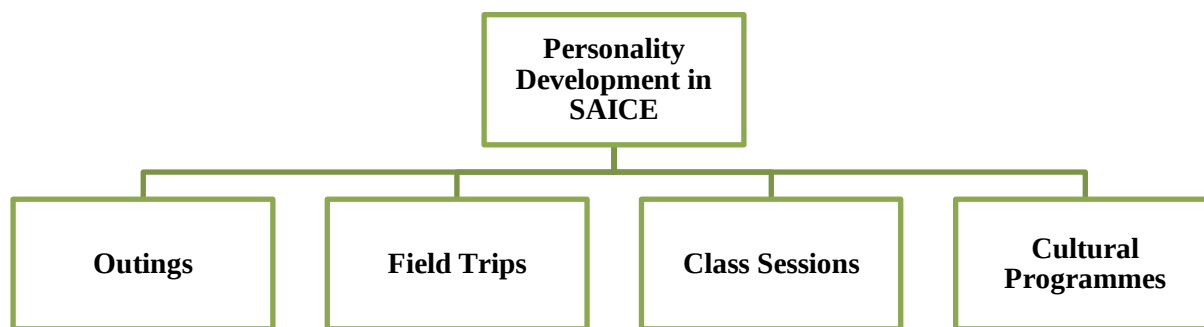
- Leadership Qualities
- Discipline
- Learn to play fair in their lives etc.

With these activities, students are also engaged in-

- Dance and Music
- Woodworking
- Carpentry
- Poultry
- Embroidery etc.

Through all these activities, students learn to express beauty and harmony. Despite that SAICE also organized various types of activities time to time-

Figure No – 4
Personality Development in SAICE



So, in this way SAICE is trying to develop the personality of students naturally not specifically because they believe that personality develops gradually and naturally that is why they have not used any specific assessment techniques for personality.

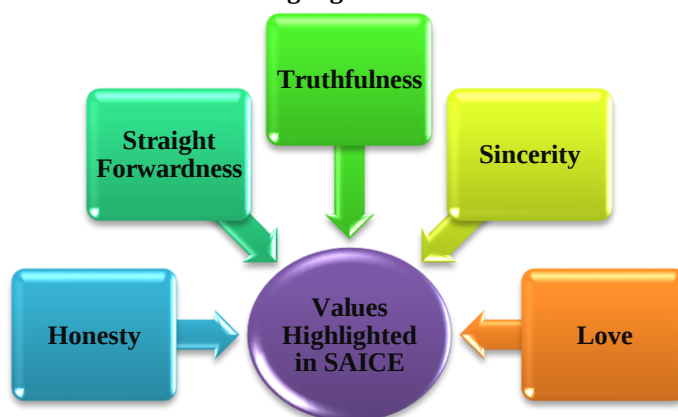
VALUE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

SAICE believes that, values do not only come from the school, but they also come from home, so these have to be emphasized particularly. In SAICE, instead of putting a lot of pressure on the students to learn their subjects and do well in exams, they do more emphasis on developing personality and creating a code of conduct, spiritual values which will help them to become better citizen.

SAICE gives appropriate opportunities to child to channelize their energies in a constructive way. They also believe that if the appropriate opportunities will not be given to the students then it becomes value crisis. SAICE believes that the physical education is the only medium to channelize their energies and value inculcation that is why SAICE promotes physical activities on regular basis and ensure that every student take part in these activities i.e. Volley Ball, Football, Basketball and many more games. SAICE enable to students to use their energies constructively.

In SAICE, every notebook has some messages from The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Institute tries to follow the book 'In Ideal Child', which is written by The Mother. The key values in SAICE are-

Figure No – 5
Values Highlighted in SAICE



SAICE refers Sri Aurobindo's Message 'the children should be helped to grow up, to become straightforward, upward and honorable human being, ready to develop into divine nature'. So, this is the ideal with which SAICE tries to inculcate these values. Despite that SAICE encouraged individual original thinking. They have no specific pre-prepared strategy to inculcate these values because they believe that there is tremendous amount of freedom in SAICE to choose from themselves. The idea is to put into contact the literature that contain values is one of the concrete methods.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SAICE do not believe in doing such type of activities separately. SAICE considers these activities are the part of the curriculum that means anything is considered co-curricular. In SAICE, there are various activities are performed on regular basis not occasionally.

Figure No – 6
Co-curricular Activities in SAICE



There is a provision of progress report, which is prepared by SAICE based on the performance of students in these activities and students are being awarded by some price or encouraging words. Therefore, in this way each and everything in SAICE considered as means of learning. SAICE also emphasized and encouraged children to do artistic activities, participate in cultural activities and programmes, working at the various farms. SAICE do not impose anything on children even they do not have any type of get together, where a person comes sermonize.

In SAICE, there are no morning assembly. Everyone sits in the classroom and there is music played in the background, everyone sits quietly and concentrate and after that start studying.



EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

In SAICE, all type of extra-curricular activities i.e. excursion, field trips, yoga, visits, meditation, games, and sports are being organized and they believe that these activities are very essential for overall development of students.

SAICE organized all these activities but not in a way that is imposed upon a child. They believe that every child is a philosopher, seeker in SAICE, asking the questions about life. There is a silence room, students can go there and concentrate on their questions. In SAICE, at the later age students chant 'Bhagwat Gita', 'Upnishad' and they are trying to assimilate to them, which help them in personality development.



SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

SAICE do not encourage too much interference of the parents. They have not Parent-Teacher Association but informally, whenever it is necessary. If institution feels that there is some problem which must be shared with the parents, then teachers meet with the parents. In SAICE, most of the parents are devotees or disciples of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. So, they are also trying to create an atmosphere which is conducive to the institution.

In SAICE there is no direct way to connect with the society. They have no outreach programme. There is a very different admission procedure. Parents of students who want to get admission in SAICE, they are given a circular which has quoted by The Mother's Message 'If parents are wanting that the children should have a degree, diploma, in hand and would like them to have status and earn well then please don't admit your child here.'

SAICE is the place where education is not delivered for career. They are not concerned with career-oriented education. They have no provision of Marksheets, Certificates, Division, Grading because they have no examination. They believe on 'Free Progress System' of education. SAICE do not appreciate any kind of pressure on child and not emphasized on competitive aptitude.

CONCLUSION

The education of a human being should begin at birth and continue throughout his life. Education should create dynamic citizen so that they are able to meet the needs of modern complex life. Further Sri Aurobindo (1956) clarified the concept of education that education is not only about acquiring information, but "the acquiring of various kind of information", he points out "is only one and not the chief of the means and necessities of education: its central aim is the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit".

Keeping in mind the ideological insight of Sri Aurobindo, rigorous analysis of each aspects of this institution has been done. It seems that SAICE is trying to develop quality human beings by the effective implication of the philosophy of 'Integral Education'.

They organize all the activities and programmes according to the holistic development of child i.e. physical, mental, vital, psyche and spiritual. They believe that spiritual development is very essential because this is the real root of values. Therefore, it may be concluded that the ideological implications of the ideology of Sri Aurobindo is reflected in all school activities and programmes. It also creates a healthy environment and regulate functions of SAICE for holistic development of the child.

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