

Artistic Handicrafts as Cultural Pedagogy in Teacher Training Program

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Abstract—This paper explores the integration of artistic handicrafts as cultural pedagogy in teacher training programmes at Vinaya Bhavana, Visva-Bharati. Rooted in Rabindranath Tagore’s holistic philosophy of education, handicrafts transcend mere manual activity and embody cultural wisdom, aesthetic sensibility, and sustainable living practices. Their inclusion in teacher training transforms education into a life-oriented process, connecting learners with indigenous traditions and community values.

Handicrafts function as powerful pedagogical tools, offering interdisciplinary applications across mathematics, science, history, and environmental studies. They cultivate holistic development by harmonising the head, heart, and hand, while simultaneously nurturing creativity, patience, and problem-solving skills. Further, handicrafts preserve cultural identity, strengthen school–community relationships, and foster ecological consciousness through sustainable practices.

The study adopts a qualitative approach, drawing upon Tagore’s philosophy, institutional observations from Visva-Bharati, and secondary literature. Findings indicate that handicraft-based pedagogy enriches teacher education by bridging tradition and modernity, empowering future teachers to deliver inclusive, creative, and culturally responsive learning experiences. Ultimately, the paper argues that handicrafts are not peripheral or ornamental but central to the philosophy and practice of teacher education at Vinaya Bhavana. They reflect Tagore’s enduring vision of education as “through life and for life,” offering pathways to create thoughtful, socially responsible, and culturally rooted educators for the future.

Index Terms—Handicrafts, Cultural Pedagogy, Teacher Training, Vinaya Bhavana, Tagore’s Philosophy, Indigenous Knowledge, Holistic Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Education, in its truest sense, is not limited to the acquisition of literacy or the preparation for

examinations. It is a lifelong process of nurturing creativity, sensitivity, and social responsibility. Rabindranath Tagore, the visionary founder of Visva-Bharati, argued that education must be rooted in life itself, where the learner develops not only intellectual capacity but also aesthetic sensibility and moral character. His philosophy of education rejected mechanical learning and instead embraced arts, crafts, and community life as integral to the growth of human beings.

At the heart of this philosophy lies the idea of cultural pedagogy, where traditions, arts, and indigenous practices form the foundation of learning. Among these, handicrafts hold a special position. Handicrafts are not merely decorative objects or manual skills; they are embodiments of a community’s history, values, and ways of living. They preserve collective memory, transmit indigenous knowledge, and nurture creativity. Incorporating handicrafts in education, therefore, means going beyond textbooks it is about engaging learners with culture, environment, and society.

Visva-Bharati, established by Tagore at Santiniketan, embodies this holistic vision of education. Within its framework, Vinaya Bhavana (Institute of Education) has played a central role in shaping future teachers. Teacher education here is not simply about mastering pedagogical techniques; it is about preparing educators who can carry forward Tagore’s ideals in contemporary contexts. For these teacher trainees, exposure to handicrafts is not an extracurricular activity but a meaningful pedagogical experience. It demonstrates how art and craft can be effectively used to teach, to inspire, and to connect learning with life.

In today’s globalised and digitalised world, such an approach becomes even more significant. The rapid spread of technology and standardised curricula often risks detaching learners from their cultural roots. Education becomes uniform, abstract, and

disconnected from the lived experiences of communities. In contrast, handicrafts represent diversity, locality, and sustainability. They remind learners of the importance of hands-on engagement, ecological balance, and cultural pride. Thus, introducing handicrafts into teacher training is not about nostalgia but about responding to pressing educational challenges alienation, consumerism, and ecological crisis.

For teacher trainees, handicrafts serve multiple purposes. First, they act as pedagogical tools: a weaving pattern may be used to teach geometry, a clay model to explain concepts of soil and ecology, or folk art to illustrate history and social customs. Second, they encourage holistic development by combining intellectual learning with emotional sensitivity and practical skill. As Tagore envisioned, education must bring harmony to the head, heart, and hand. Third, they promote cultural preservation, enabling future teachers to help students take pride in their heritage while embracing modern knowledge. Finally, handicrafts strengthen the bond between school and community, as local artisans and traditions are brought into the educational process.

The relevance of handicrafts is also underscored by contemporary educational policies. The National Education Policy (2020) of India emphasizes experiential learning, vocational education, and respect for cultural traditions. These objectives align closely with Tagore's century-old vision and confirm the importance of handicraft-based pedagogy in teacher education. By embedding crafts in teaching practice, Vinaya Bhavana not only honours its legacy but also addresses the needs of present-day education. Despite these potentials, there remains a gap in research that directly connects handicrafts with teacher training practices in institutions like Vinaya Bhavana. While much has been written on Tagore's philosophy and on cultural education in general, fewer studies examine the specific role

of handicrafts in shaping teacher trainees' pedagogical approaches. This paper seeks to fill that gap. It argues that handicrafts are not peripheral or ornamental activities but are central to the preparation of teachers who can deliver inclusive, sustainable, and life-oriented education.

Therefore, this study explores how artists' handicrafts function as cultural pedagogy in teacher training at Vinaya Bhavana, Visva-Bharati. It analyses their role in

promoting holistic development, preserving cultural identity, fostering community engagement, and enhancing pedagogical creativity. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on how traditional knowledge can enrich modern education and how Tagore's vision continues to inspire innovative practices in teacher education.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Artistic handicraft is widely understood as a medium of cultural expression, representing traditions, community values, and collective identities. Scholars note that handicraft serves as a repository of cultural memory, enabling the transmission of local knowledge and practices across generations (Desai, 2019). In the context of teacher education, craft-based learning provides trainee teachers with direct exposure to cultural narratives and indigenous knowledge systems, strengthening their cultural sensitivity and awareness.

2.1 Various Review Related Literature :

Billing (1995), "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" : This study emphasizes culturally relevant pedagogy aimed at supporting African American and marginalized students. It is based on three key principles—academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness—rooted in Freire's theory. The study critiques earlier teaching models for neglecting cultural contexts and advocates inclusive teaching practices and teacher training that integrate students' cultural identities.

Inam (2024), "Influence of Arts and Crafts on Indian Architecture Styles" : This study explores how traditional arts and crafts like stone carvings, frescoes, and regional art forms have historically influenced Indian architecture. It highlights the fusion of traditional craftsmanship with modern techniques in contemporary architecture, emphasizing its role in preserving cultural identity while addressing modern design challenges.

Srivastava (2023), "Importance of Craft in Reconstructing Education: A Holistic Approach"

: The study highlights the role of craft education in holistic child development, including creativity, motor skills, and problem-solving. It emphasizes the

historical significance of craft in Indian education and advocates its integration into the curriculum to promote intellectual and social development, aligning with Gandhian educational philosophy.

Peng (2023), “The Practice of Integration of Art Education and Regional Culture Towards Pedagogy Enhancement” : This study examines how integrating arts and regional culture into education enhances creativity, critical thinking, and communication. While educators show moderate success, challenges such as lack of resources and support persist. The study stresses the need for stronger collaboration among educators, communities, and institutions.

Dorokhova et al. (2020), “Artistic Pedagogy in the Context of Digitalization of Education” : This study discusses the evolution of artistic pedagogy and the role of digital technologies in teaching traditional art crafts. It highlights the importance of ICT tools, network-based education, and electronic resources in enhancing artistic learning and overcoming geographical barriers in art education.

Prasad (1998), “Art: The Basis of Education” : Devi Prasad emphasizes art as a fundamental medium for education, especially for first-generation learners. The study highlights how art facilitates expression, sensitivity, and self-development. It supports Tagore’s educational philosophy and advocates art-based learning for holistic growth and cultural awareness.

Mandal (2021), “Multicultural Education and Community Oriented Teacher Preparation: A Study on Santiniketan” : This study focuses on community-oriented teacher education inspired by Tagore’s model at Santiniketan. It emphasizes integrating local culture and community engagement in teacher training to ensure quality and equity in education, addressing the gap in conventional teacher preparation systems.

Paciaukiene et al. (2019), “From Handicraft to Technologies: Historical Development of Handicraft Education in General Schools in Lithuania” : The study traces the evolution of handicraft education in Lithuania, highlighting its role in developing practical skills and preparing students for industry and daily life. Despite societal changes, the focus on traditional

crafts and vocational skills has remained consistent.

Kokko & Raisanen (2013), “Craft Education in Sustaining and Developing Craft Traditions”

This study examines the role of craft education in preserving cultural heritage in Finland. It finds that students’ engagement with traditional crafts depends largely on personal motivation. The study calls for stronger emphasis on craft traditions in teacher education to safeguard cultural heritage.

Wijayanti et al. (2023), “Patterns of Teacher Pedagogical Creativity in Cultural Arts and Crafts Subjects in Elementary Schools” : This study explores pedagogical creativity in teaching arts and crafts. It identifies key aspects such as adaptability, innovation, imagination, and research orientation. The findings highlight the importance of creative teaching methods in enhancing student engagement and emphasize the need to overcome barriers to pedagogical innovation.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To identify and classify the various forms of artistic handicraft practices that are incorporated within the B.Ed curriculum. It aims to understand what kinds of creative and traditional craft-based activities are being practiced by teacher trainees, how these practices are integrated into their training, and to what extent they reflect local, regional, or indigenous art forms. Through this objective, the study seeks to map the diversity and scope of handicraft-based pedagogy within teacher education programs.

The second objective focuses on analyzing how involvement in artistic handicraft activities influences the cultural understanding and sensitivity of B.Ed trainees. It aims to assess whether such practices help trainees appreciate cultural diversity, develop respect for traditional knowledge systems, and foster a sense of belonging to their cultural roots. The study also explores how participation in handicraft-based learning contributes to trainees’ holistic development as culturally responsive educators.

The third objective intends to explore how artistic handicraft practices serve as an educational tool for the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage. It investigates how engaging with handicrafts can help B.Ed trainees become active agents in transmitting cultural values, traditions, and craftsmanship to future generations. This objective emphasizes the

pedagogical role of artistic handicrafts in sustaining cultural continuity within educational settings.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the implications of cultural pedagogy on the sustainability and innovation of artistic handicraft practices?
2. How do the artistic handicraft practices of Vinaya Bhavana contribute to the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge and skills from one generation to the next?
3. How do the artistic handicraft practices influence cultural awareness and the aesthetic appreciation of B.Ed trainees?

V. METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a qualitative and descriptive approach, focusing on philosophical inquiry, institutional practices, and secondary research. The methodology consists of the following dimensions:

Institutional Observation: The practices of Visva-Bharati and Vinaya Bhavana are observed in relation to the inclusion of art and craft in teacher training. This involves studying workshops, community projects, and cultural exhibitions that integrate handicrafts into the learning process.

Secondary Sources: Relevant literature, including books, journal articles, and policy documents like the National Education Policy (2020), are reviewed to contextualise handicrafts in contemporary teacher education.

Interpretive Approach: Using a reflective framework, the study connects Tagore's early 20th-century ideals with present-day challenges in education such as globalisation, cultural alienation, and the need for sustainability.

VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Diverse Artistic Handicraft Practices Identified:

The Teacher Training program actively integrates various traditional and indigenous artistic handicrafts as part of its cultural pedagogy. The most commonly practiced forms include:

- ❖ Batik Painting - Using wax-resist dyeing techniques

on fabric.

- ❖ Bandhani (Tie-Dye) - A traditional method of tie-dyeing using knots to form patterns.
- ❖ Sara Painting - A localized folk art form involving symbolic and decorative motifs.
- ❖ Alpana/Rangoli - Floor art used for ritual and decorative purposes.

Integration into Curriculum:

These handicrafts are primarily integrated into the Work Education, and Cultural Pedagogy components of the curriculum. Students are encouraged not only to learn the techniques but also to understand their cultural, social, and educational significance.

Pedagogical and Cultural Relevance:

Students are guided to explore how these artistic forms: Reflect cultural narratives and folk traditions.

Foster creativity, patience, and discipline in learners.

Can be used as a teaching tool in primary and secondary education for integrated learning (e.g., combining craft with history or environmental education).

Gender and Community Participation:

The findings also suggest that these handicrafts promote inclusive participation across gender and social backgrounds. Female students, in particular, showed a strong affinity and interest in embroidery and decorative crafts, while clay modeling and painting were appreciated across all demographics.

Skill Development and Vocational Linkage:

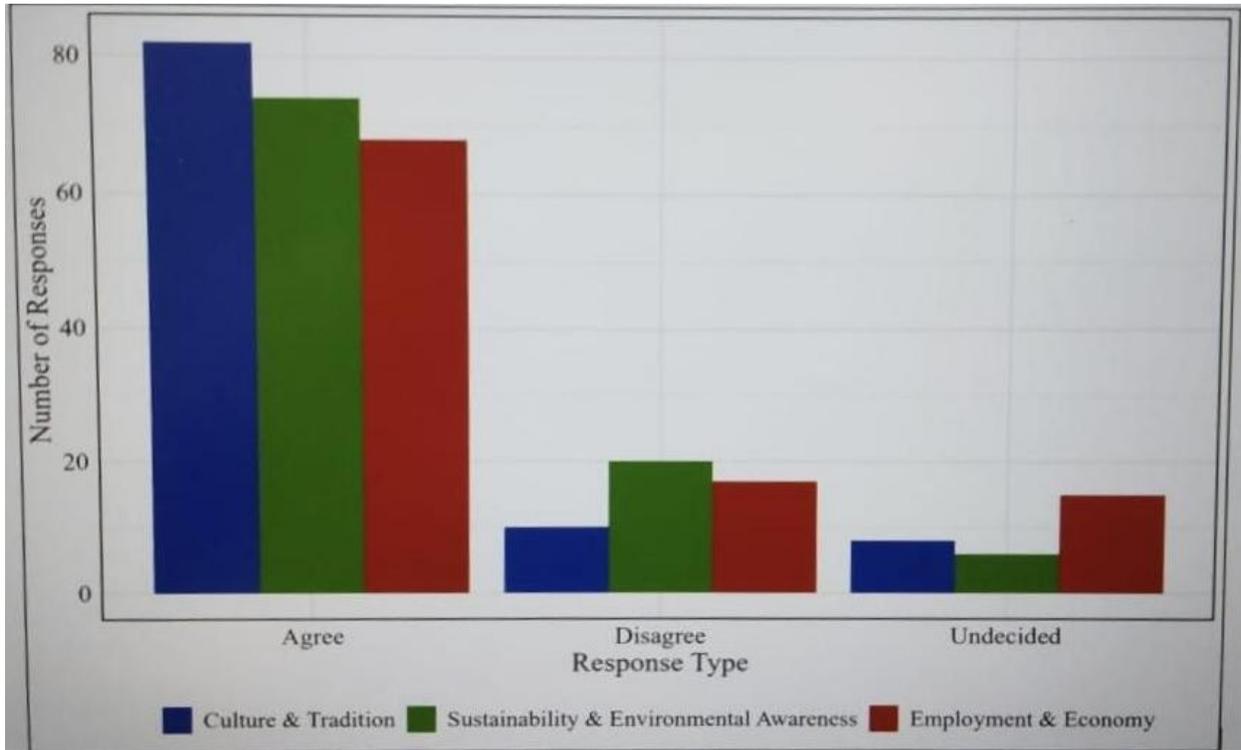
Some students acknowledged the vocational potential of these crafts. Many expressed interest in using these skills for self-employment, cultural entrepreneurship, or for conducting workshops in their future teaching roles.

Reflection of Regional Identity:

A significant number of students emphasized that engaging in these crafts deepens their connection with Bengali folk culture, Santiniketan's aesthetic ethos, and Tagorean educational philosophy, which promotes learning through art and culture.

Revival of Indigenous Knowledge:

Exposure to traditional artistic techniques contributed to the revival and preservation of indigenous knowledge systems among future educators.



VII. CONCLUSION

The exploration of artistic handicrafts such as Batik, Sara, and Bandhani as tools of cultural pedagogy holds significant relevance for the B.Ed students of Vinaya-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati. These traditional practices not only serve as mediums of creative expression but also embody the deep-rooted cultural, historical, and regional identities of India. By incorporating these handicrafts into teacher education, future educators are sensitized to the importance of preserving and promoting indigenous knowledge systems within the classroom.

Such pedagogical engagement enriches their educational experience by developing aesthetic sensibility, moral values, and a respect for diversity. Moreover, it empowers them to transmit this cultural heritage to future generations in meaningful ways. The role of these practices extends beyond skill-building they foster a sense of belonging, national pride, and social responsibility. Ultimately, integrating artistic handicrafts into the B.Ed curriculum strengthens the bridge between education and culture, aligning with the holistic vision of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education at Visva-Bharati.

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