



Volume 17(1): 28-30
www.ejолts.net
ISSN 2009-1788

Educational Journal of Living Theories

**Book Review: Rawal, S. Play Practice
(2023) Pursue 10-day Bagless School
Approach to Pre-vocational: A Practical
Handbook for Schools and Teachers.
Himalaya Publishing House.**

Suresh Nanwani & Brian Williamson

Suresh Nanwani

Durham University, UK.

nanwanis@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0985-5526>

Brian Williamson

University of Bolton, UK.

brian.george.williamson@gmail.com

<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1680-9894>

Submitted 09/02/2024

Accepted for publication

20/02/2024

CC BY-NC

Copyright: © 2024 Nanwani & Williamson .

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

This inspiring and invigorating book provides insights into education, especially curriculum development and assessment. The narrative in the book is that of the author, Swaroop Sampat Rawal, an Indian educator and leader on children's education. It provides a scholarly discourse on education and associated theories from Eastern and Western traditions plus a golden opportunity to better understand various traditions in India of spirituality and improving educational practice and professionalism through those lenses.

The book is a welcoming and refreshing introduction to the complex ideas and thoughts on spirituality in India and other countries that embrace Indian traditions. The author clearly enunciates her thoughts about how her bagless school concept has morphed into curriculum and programmes of work. The book has four parts. Part 1 introduces the 'bagless' school concept from the dynamics of pre-vocational education in India's National Education Policy (NEP), 2020; Part 2 discusses designing a pre-vocational approach of a bagless school curriculum for a holistic and learner-centered curriculum. Part 3 offers a detailed classroom illustration relating theory to practice. Part 4 is the epilogue in which the author shares with us her insights, reflections, and thoughts, including re-presenting her living-educational-theory.

Indian Traditions

For the reader who may not be familiar with Indian traditions, the book provides valuable information, especially in relation to spirituality. For the reader informed with these traditions, the book opens the door for a wider and broader interpretation of values and core concepts such as *seva* (selfless service) (p. 148), *bhajan* (devotional song with religious themes or spiritual ideas) (p. 54) and *asana* (posture as used in yoga) (p. 86).

The Bagless School Concept in Pre-vocational Education

The author has spent many years (from as early as 2011) collaborating with Indian ministries to create the National Vocational Education Qualifications for Theatre and Stage Craft. Rawal narrates her 12-year journey to the present when she executed her educational project. However, this book is much more than a personal journey. It is, as the title indicates, a practical handbook for schools and teachers and is also a hands-on contribution to furthering education for children, especially the young children of today, who will be the leaders of tomorrow.

The author selflessly narrates her long journey with her reflections as she is aided by colleagues and friends from many quarters – the Lavad village community in Gujerat, India where the bagless school curriculum project was carried out; the teachers and students of Adarsh Primary School in Lavad; her mentors; and her team members. The acknowledgment of different stakeholders is a testament that the journey was not alone but with the help of many others who made the bagless school project a success, which can be emulated elsewhere in India and other places.

We benefit from Rawal sharing with us her personal learning journey, in which she frankly addresses her shortcomings and contradictions within her own practice. One instance is where she readily admits that, despite knowing and understanding the need for a student-centered methodology, she did not voice her protest and did not draft something suitable for primary schools (p. 4). Her readiness to learn from her past is demonstrated in her account of what she has learned and where she now presents how she had the fortitude to explain her opinion and realised she needed to look deeper. The results are rewarding: not only for her in expressing herself and knowing herself, but for us – readers, schools, children, and educators.

Takeaways From This Book

The main gift we receive in this book is a view of a spectacular project for primary schools where she created a filmmaking workshop and stimulated the creative imaginations of the children, thereby deepening their in-class learning. The bagless school project presented by the author in this book is a living example of how a project is brought to life, for the children and for their education. In the process, educators benefit from the author's pre-vocational curriculum building. It was fortuitous that the NEP, 2020 introduced the bagless school concept. The author seized the opportunity, notwithstanding the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, to broaden the concept with additional elements that were based on a holistic learning approach (p. 45). 'Big ideas' such as life skills – emotional,

social, and thinking – were incorporated into the project, together with cultural aspects in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda (pp. 46-49).

Additionally, we can learn from the author’s journey where she considers the relationship between culture and religion in India (pp. 50–53) and reminds us that Hinduism “does not endorse proselytisation.” She goes on to explore aesthetics and art in India. Aesthetics and traditional Indian art are spiritual (p. 60). Malevich's ‘Red Square’ and “letting go of all .” provides an exciting example from another cultural context (Sakhno, 2021). Rawal uses aesthetic education as an approach to teaching and learning as a way to promote creativity, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence in students (p. 63). Among the many innovative lessons taught in the bagless school project are soap making and sewing (pp. 116-121).

We learn from the author that it is acceptable to make errors but to keep learning in the process of discovering ourselves in our journey of becoming better educators. She readily shares with us her “mistake” when she initially drew a parallel between rural students and urban children but realised that, as an educator, it is her responsibility to prioritize the needs of all children, regardless of their geographic location (p. 145). It is through her candor that she refines her living-educational- theory approach and this refinement benefits her students and can be replicated in other school projects.

A Very Helpful Guide

This book, with its focus on experimentation within the bagless school project, provides an excellent resource for those in search of enhancing professionalism in education. Coincidentally, the University Grants Commission in India announced in December 2023 its approval of guidelines for the introduction of short-term skill development courses in higher education institutes. This book is timely and provides food for thought for those integrating up-skilling into higher education at all levels.

The book is a very useful resource for those in search of school project in education and, through the lens of living-educational-theory, the author has enabled us to approach education with a wider perspective, using non-western concepts. This is a welcome addition to the sparse but growing literature in the realm of different approaches to education that encourages human flourishing for all students from different parts of the world and encourages us all to be global citizens.

References

SDG (2020) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. United Nations. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

NEP (2020) *National Education Policy*. Government of India. Retrieved from <https://www.aicte-india.org/sites/default/files/nep2020.pdf>

Sakhno, I., 2021. Kazimir Malevich’s Negative Theology and Mystical Suprematism. *Religions*, 12(7), p.542. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070542>