

Delivering Holistic Education for Contemporary Times

Banasthali Vidyapith and the Gurukula System

Sharda S. Nandram · Ankur Joshi · Sukhada · Vishwanath Dhital

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam · Nyenrode Business Universiteit · Banasthali Vidyapith · IIT (BHU)

CENTRAL PROPOSITION

Educating the person.
Preparing for life.

A qualitative comparison explores how indigenous educational principles can inform contemporary learning.



Read the research

01 Background and question

Higher education faces questions about purpose, values and the development of the whole person. The paper examines Banasthali Vidyapith through the lens of the Gurukula tradition, attentive to historical and cultural context.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How does Banasthali adapt Gurukula principles to deliver holistic education in contemporary conditions?

02 Conceptual framework

Fivefold learning

Physical · practical · aesthetic · moral · intellectual.

Lived education

Learning through study, practice and community.

The comparison considers educational aims, content, pedagogy and the organisation of daily life. It connects self-reliance with interdependence and individual development with social responsibility.

03 Evidence and method

Qualitative comparative study drawing on visits over three years, observation, documents and interviews.

The study includes 12 formal in-depth interviews at Banasthali and three Gurukula expert interviews; three Gurukulas were visited. Interpretive analysis combines insider and outsider perspectives. Two experts subsequently joined the author team.

04 The original institutional comparison

The source table compares educational aims, pedagogy and everyday arrangements across the two settings.

Table 1 Comparing the Gurukula system and Banasthali Vidyapith, key features

<i>Element of education</i>	<i>Traditional Gurukul</i>	<i>Banasthali Vidyapith</i>
Ultimate objective <i>niḥśreyasa</i>	सा विद्या या विमुक्तये – Mokṣa ¹² – liberation	सा विद्या या विमुक्तये – Mokṣa – liberation
<i>Saamsaarik</i> objective <i>abhyudaya</i>	Holistic development of mind and body	Holistic development of mind and body
Content	Ānvīkṣiki, Trayī, Itihāsa-purāṇa, Nīti	Panch Mukhi
Pedagogy	Multichannel learning	Practice schools, instructional design, internships
Infrastructure	Natural, minimal	Largely natural and serene
Routine	Compulsorily starts early – Brahmamuhūrta	Voluntarily starts at 6 AM; compulsorily starts at 8 AM
Fees	None	Minimal
Management	Kula of a guru	Hybrid (ideological family)
Type of lodging	Fulltime residential	Fulltime residential
Major focus	Self-discipline	Self-discipline, respect for women
General administration and activities	Mainly student-driven (Svāvalambana)	Students involved in variousactivities
Entrepreneurship	Many students set up their own Gurukula after graduating	Atal Incubation Center, which has more than 25 start-ups while recently set up

Original Table 1, [1], p. 233. Institutional features are reproduced as reported in the 2021 paper.

Whole person	Shared life	Student agency
Complementary domains of development.	Education through community.	Practice and responsibility.

05 Findings and contributions

A Development across domains

Banasthali’s fivefold education brings intellectual learning together with physical, practical, aesthetic and moral development.

B Community as a learning setting

Residential life, daily routines and student participation connect education with lived responsibilities.

C Tradition through adaptation

The comparison identifies continuities with Gurukula while examining changes in pedagogy, organisation and opportunity.

06 Discussion

The case suggests that holistic education depends on the relationship between curriculum, institutional culture and everyday practice. Indigenous principles can be examined for contemporary relevance while recognising differences of context.

07 Limitations and next steps

The study offers contextual qualitative insight rather than a causal test of educational outcomes. Wider comparisons and student-focused evaluations would help examine transferability and longer-term effects.

CONCLUSION

Holistic education links intellectual growth with embodied practice, values and participation in a shared community.

SELECTED REFERENCES

[1] Nandram, S. S., Joshi, A., Sukhada, & Dhital, V. (2021). Delivering holistic education for contemporary times: Banasthali Vidyapith and the Gurukula system. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation*, 29(2), 222-247. doi:10.1504/IJBG.2021.118235.

[2] Brühlmeier, A. (2010). *Head, Heart and Hand: Education in the Spirit of Pestalozzi*. Open Book Publishers.

[3] Joshi, A., & Gupta, R. K. (2017). Elementary education in Bharat (India): Insights from a postcolonial ethnographic study of a Gurukul. *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*, 15(1), 100-120.

[4] Datar, S. M., Garvin, D. A., & Cullen, P. G. (2010). *Rethinking the MBA: Business Education at a Crossroads*. Harvard Business Press.