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Transformative cosmopolitan education and Gandhi's relevance today

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This article is dedicated to Daniel Mazgaonkar, Bombay Sarvodaya Friendship Center.

Abstract

The understanding of transformative education in this article is based on the principles and practice of global learning. Globalization is understood as a transformative process creating challenges for society, human beings and education. Global learning, framed within sustainability and justice, is understood as a way of handling the transformative challenges of a world society. It is embedded in processes of European history. In this way, it is possible to see global learning as world societal literacy that goes beyond reading and writing, and to understand it as another level of enlightenment. To do so, I refer to the social, philosophical and educational ideas of M.K. Gandhi, also known as Mahatma ('great soul') (1869–1948), which still create a basis for reform-oriented concepts of basic education, literacy and sociopolitical literacy in India today. These are historical concepts concerning transformation of the self and education as a means of handling transformative societies beyond an existing understanding of Western civilization in a systematic way. The concluding concept of transformative cosmopolitan education presents World Nai Talim as a basis for an enlightenment that is equally applicable to both the Global South and North.

Keywords: theory of global learning; societal and educational transformation; world society; cosmopolitanism/world citizenship; Mahatma Gandhi; Nai Talim

Preliminary remarks

The term transformative cosmopolitan education encompasses historical understandings and systematic choices. From this perspective, it is possible to reflect on the challenges of today's world society concerning educational theory and practice, beyond colonialist thinking. Having frequently visited the Indian subcontinent and participated in cooperative debates with colleagues in India since 1987, I understand that the concept of world society and globalization is challenging for them. This has much to do with a fear of neocolonialism in the name of modern civilization. At the same time, I see that the historic-systematic search for answers to actual problems has to be much more sensitive in terms of who is using what term in what context. For example, in the case of Gandhi, we see references to ancient Indian civilization dating back centuries as a challenge for reflection today. Here, it is important to differentiate between two interpretations. One is to follow the Gandhian line, with his open-minded, constructive and democratic successors. The other is to link Indian history – sometimes including Gandhi – to the idea of an exclusive *Hindutva* (ideology of India as a Hindu-nation only), as favoured by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, a right-wing and

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Hindu nationalist party) and its allies. Gandhi had the vision of an inclusive nation within the whole world, where unity in diversity is practised on all societal levels. The Hindutva ideology follows an understanding of inclusion according to Hindu rules in a very narrow framework, in particular ignoring the world's second largest Muslim community and their needs.

Transformative cosmopolitan education underlines the long existing vision of cosmopolitanism as described by Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (*c.*1467–1536) some 500 years ago and has much relevance for a sustainable and just society of today (Bastian and Lang-Wojtasik, 2017).

The use of the term transformation indicates a reference to various enlightenments beyond a narrow understanding of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century ideas. Here, German scientists have a special responsibility concerning the 'dialectic of the enlightenment' (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2008). Having experienced German fascism, Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and Theodor W. Adorno (1903–69) thought critically about the role of rationality as the most important basis of European enlightenment. Keeping this in mind, it is helpful to have a look at the various periods of European enlightenment within world history beyond the narrow view of 'modernity' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, affecting developments in the perception of the world. Starting with Greek antiquity (*1st enlightenment*), it passes through reformations and renaissance (*2nd enlightenment*), modernity (*3rd enlightenment*), and its functional differentiation as today's world society (*4th enlightenment*) taken as a reference for communication (Treml, 2005: 181ff). In these entire discourses one can find aspects of cosmopolitanism (Seitz, 2017b) to deal with the challenges seen in the specific eras, regarding humans and their position within the world. Today's world situation is characterized as a human-made ('anthropo') civilization. The end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century is the era ('cene'), where dialectical and paradoxical processes of human being and society become more and more visible. These 'limits to growth' (Meadows *et al.*, 1972) require urgent solutions in terms of the survival of the globe and the options for people to participate. So, the very old cosmopolitan question arises: How do we motivate people to stand up for their rights as cosmopolitans within the 'anthropocene' (Bastian, 2016)?

The term 'Great Transformation' (Seitz, 2017a) characterizes the actual situation of society where people seem to be paralysed by the overwhelming nature of transformation processes. They face difficulties in remembering their cognitive abilities in a rational way to create solutions for existing problems of non-sustainable developments. This is a call for a global societal literacy beyond reading and writing in a sociopolitical understanding as a possible *5th enlightenment*. It is a feasible description of today's educational necessities beyond a narrow focus on reading and writing, and without asking about the why and how of culture and participation (Lang-Wojtasik, 2017b).

The article starts by sketching global learning as a transformative educational concept. Then Gandhi's ideas about society and basic education are described as important non-Western frames of reference on how to handle the challenges of today. On this basis, the main aspects of transformative cosmopolitan education, as represented by world *Nai Talim*, are presented.

Global learning as transformative education

Thinking about global learning and its transformative educational capability, one has first to take a look at the underlying concept of society. Globalization and the development

towards a world society mark fundamental transformation processes beyond national boundaries (Luhmann, 1971, 1997; Treml, 2000). In systems theory, world society as a reference of communication is perceived in four perspectives or dimensions of meaning (Lang-Wojtasik, 2014b): spatial, temporal, factual and social. It is important to mention that these four views of society and education are interlinked and circular perspectives on various phenomena. Therefore, starting from one perspective always implies having the other perspectives in mind. The four dimensions or perspectives are deeply rooted within European enlightenment. Deriving from Georg W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) and Niklas Luhmann (1927–98), they have become an important analytical tool within the German understanding of global learning (Treml, 2000; Scheunpflug and Schröck, 2002; Luhmann, 1995). Table 1 (see page 81) charts these four perspectives on ideas of transformation and Gandhian transformation, culminating in transformative cosmopolitan education.

With a spatial perspective on the transformation of world society (Table 1, col. 1), we notice an emergence of the delimitation of the nation state as frame of reference. We also see the emergence of 'glocalization' as a phenomenon (Robertson, 1998), which describes parallel and interlinked processes of global and local developments beyond national limitations, characterized by new network structures (Castells, 1996, 1997).

From a temporal perspective (Table 1, col. 1), we perceive a 'shrinking of time' (UNDP, 1999: 1) concerning solutions for global challenges, and the relevance of regular communication beyond time zones to distinctions between nation states and associated societies. Although time stays constant, its relevance seems to be perceived beyond given time (de-temporalization). News is virtually presented and seems to change at breathtaking speed. In consequence, it becomes more and more difficult to be assured of its significance. At the same time, we experience an acceleration of social change in many parts of the world, that is, changes of social structure within a specific time frame (Fuchs-Heinritz *et al.*, 1995). That leads to an accompanying debate regarding the legitimation of values, issues and interests. Anything seems to be possible without clear orientation between past and future in the present. Maybe we have already entered a turning point in history.

From a factual perspective (Table 1, col. 1), we see that the volume of information, the growth of information and the interrelations between differing types of information seem to be overwhelming, and to move from complexity to somewhere beyond complexity (Russell, 1992). This is perceived as contingency (being forced to select and decide despite various options). At the same time, we also know that the world has to act concerning global problems. The Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015) offer an international policy mandate (Datta and Lang-Wojtasik, 2016; Lang-Wojtasik and Natterer, 2017).

From a social perspective (Table 1, col. 1), we are confronted with a massive drive towards individualization, which started with the semantics of the 3rd European enlightenment, taking the individual as something unique and the concepts of equality and liberty as the normative references for everyone (Luhmann, 2005). In consequence, it is thought that everyone is responsible for their own success. But following this leads to plurality as normality, which can be experienced in the growing heterogeneity of life concepts. In the end, this social perspective is confronted with the difference between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' concerning privileges and their role in society.

These four perspectives are summarized as the manifold variations of the perceptions, risks and insecurities of transforming world society. The challenges for the transformation of learning, therefore, involve handling the paradoxes of openness and containment (spatial), certainty and uncertainty (temporal), knowledge and lack of knowledge (factual), and familiarity and strangeness (social) (see Table 1, col. 2).

Through global learning (Table 1, col. 3), as a concept with diverse traditions and interdisciplinary references, it is possible to develop an attitude of questioning the world (Asbrand *et al*., 2006). Global learning transforms options, providing possibilities for handling the tensions between the ever-increasing variety and the search for uniqueness, civilized risk and natural danger, and uncertainty and anthropologically necessary security (Lang-Wojtasik, 2017a).

It is generally seen as an educational task that places learning challenges, opportunities and options in an analytical and action-oriented context. Through this, transformative educational and learning processes are supposed to happen (Lang-Wojtasik, 2017a, 2017b). Global learning is related to the normative principles of sustainability and justice (Scheunpflug and Schröck, 2002; Lang-Wojtasik and Klemm, 2017). This creates possibilities for handling different options for human survival in different fields. These include peace and non-violence, migration and multiculturalism, development and the environment, as well as human rights and diversity (Lang-Wojtasik, 2014a). At the European level, various concepts are combined with global learning, such as 'Development Education, Human Rights Education, Education for Sustainability, Education for Peace and Conflict Prevention and Intercultural Education; being the global dimensions of Education for Citizenship' (O'Loughlin and Wegimont, 2003: 13).

As a multifaceted concept, global learning provides reflexive possibilities for handling differences within world society. There are four areas of reflection and action named as paradoxes, which can be described using the systematization of the four dimensions presented above (Lang-Wojtasik, 2017a, 2017b) – see Table 1, col. 3.

Global abstraction and concretion (spatial) describes handling global networking and local anchoring. Here, it is a challenge to handle the dissociation of concrete and abstract by dialogical and meta-communicative approaches. It is aimed at making one's own spatial reference comprehensible in the tension of local/regional/national/global seen in world society. Thus, options are to be tested for handling the paradox of openness and containment.

Sustained deceleration and orientation in the moment (temporal) offers options for a mindful pausing in the present as a counterpoint to the acceleration of time. This might open paths to produce reflexive references to past and future. Through intra- and inter-generational dialogue, it seems possible to handle the paradox of certainty and uncertainty as moment-related.

Exemplary multiculturalism (factual) stands for enabling the handling of cross-sectional areas of cultural socialization. It is about the reflection of different forms of cultural expression in material manifestations and other communicative offers for handling the paradox of knowledge and lack of knowledge.

Cooperative plurality and a need-oriented action for the benefit of all (social) describes anthropological options for individuals within a collective. This opens contexts of experiencing social acceptance through grounded references to oneself and to equally different people. Thus, the paradox of familiarity and strangeness offers reflexive opportunities for democratic plurality (see Table 1, cols 2 and 3).

The understanding I have presented above of transformation concerning world society and the relevant options of global learning lead to the question of how to move forward and find feasible ways to realize this global learning. In response to this question, the following considerations focus on M.K. Gandhi's thoughts on society and education.

Gandhi's societal and educational basics

From today's perspective, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (also known as Mahatma Gandhi), stands as an icon of constant societal transformation in a cosmopolitan way. He received his academic education in British institutions (1888–93). In London, he was in contact with many people who stood for transformative ideas, such as vegetarians, anarchists, socialists, conscientious objectors and pacifists. As a lawyer by profession, he realized the paradox of justice and equity. In South Africa (1893–1914), he started his 'experiments with truth' (Gandhi, 1927) as a form of holistic change encompassing self and society in spiritual and political ways. In the beginning, it was mainly a fight against the racism within the apartheid system, particularly concerning the Indian minority. In South Africa, Gandhi conceptualized his understanding of non-violence as a concentric concept, starting from the grassroots and affecting all parts of society.

After returning to India in 1914, Gandhi travelled the country for one year to understand the situation there, particularly in the villages. He adapted his concept of non-violence to the conditions in India, and made it the basis of the independence movement and of a clear vision for the future of India (1915–48). In all his activities, he focused on the needs of the most downtrodden people. In a spiritual-political way, he embedded his understanding of transformation within the globe as a gift from a higher force.

Thinking about Gandhi today, and the way his work encourages one to tackle actual challenges in society and education, one has to take into account that it is always difficult to transfer historical experiences to other time periods. The India of the early twentieth century is different from today's India. From a European perspective, it is challenging to deal with the nearly 100 volumes of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Gandhi, 1962–93, referred to in this article as CWMG), which are categorized differently in India and Germany.

At the same time, it is always touching to discover the current relevance of Gandhi's ideas (e.g. as documented in GandhiServe India, 2016). In education, it is very visible that three characteristics arise continuously (Lang-Wojtasik, 2002: 185):

1. Embedding of education within the philosophical concept of societal transformation,
2. Interlinkage of education and ethics as well as coherence of Aims and Paths,
3. Interdisciplinary approaches and correlation of theory and practice.

The two works *Hind Swaraj* (Gandhi, 1938) and *Constructive Programme* (Gandhi, 1941) give a valuable overview of Gandhian thinking concerning society and education, and their reciprocity. This is relevant in India and to world society with a historic-systematic reconceptualization. It helps to give Gandhi's innovative ideas of those days a 'fresh look' as mentioned in the subtitle of Kanti Shah's book concerning *Hind Swaraj* (Shah, 2009). For this article, two questions are important: 'What is true civilization?' and 'What is the meaning of Education?' (Gandhi, 1938: 60 and 87).

Thinking about Gandhi's relevance today will be done in two steps. First, I will give a description of the Gandhian transformative potential for society to start from the self – understanding of his philosophical ideas and ethical principles. Second, I will take these considerations as a context to describe a possible interpretation of Gandhi's *Nai Talim* ('New Education' in the Hindustani language) or *Buniyadi Shiksha* ('Basic Education' in the Hindi language) as historic concepts, which have the constant innovation potential to transform education.

Transformation of the self within society

The vast range of terms often based in Indian spirituality and philosophy used by Gandhi in different contexts presents a challenge in understanding for non-Indians. I will refer to the previously mentioned framework of four dimensions (spatial, temporal, factual and social) to describe the underlying potential of debates about transformation of society and education.

It is important to underline the necessity of voluntary self-transformation as a basis for societal transformation. In a concentric understanding, the change to the self is the starting point to change family, surrounding community (village or other), region, nation and the globe.

Spatially, the visionary idea of *Ahimsa* (non-violence, non-destruction, non-hate, non-envy, love) is a transformative expression beyond passive non-violence. The aim of the absence of violence includes any kind of destructive thinking and action and seems absolutely possible only for the creator of the world. At the same time, this vision is approachable if one believes in the equality of humankind. In this way Ahimsa and equality are very helpful in debates on non-violence globally. They are somehow connected with 'world-patriotism' (that is, humanity-based patriotism beyond nations and nation-states) as cosmopolitanism. To quote Gandhi:

> I was serving the whole nation and, if you will, the whole of humanity […] Under this plan of life in seeming to serve India to the exclusion of every other country, I do not harm any other country. My patriotism is both exclusive and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that in all humility I confine my attention to the land of my birth, but it is inclusive in the sense that my service is not of a competitive or antagonistic nature […] It is the key to a proper practice of Ahimsa or love (Gandhi, 1947: 126).

In this way, Ahimsa indicates power beyond confining nations, hate and suffering, based on empathy and appraisal. It means unconditional love for the other and the self (Gandhi, 1947). This seems to be very near also to the Christian concept of charity, which signifies loving the other as you love yourself. Ahimsa is also understood as unconditional love and linked to *Brahmacharya* (abstinence concerning all luxury and unnecessary goods to reach selflessness). It encompasses a close contact with God and a full control of one's senses (*Harijan*, 13 June 1936, in Gandhi, 1954). Unfortunately, this is often translated very narrowly as chastity linked to sexuality. However, it encompasses abdication of all forms of luxury and unnecessary items to reach radical altruism. The term has the potential to indicate what people need instead of what they lack.

This is the starting point for Gandhi's concept of 'constructive equality', as I would name it. I understand it as being beyond equalization and meaning unity in diversity. It implies options for every human being to freely unfold his or her abilities

('Not necessarily impure', *Harijan*, 22 February 1942, CWMG 75). In consequence, it leads to respect for diverse human potential beyond simple economic interest.

Bearing this in mind, we can look beyond the historic context, to what Ahimsa can mean today, to understand what potential it might have to make the world a place of equality for everyone and what that means for cosmopolitanism. This leads us directly to the transformation in a temporal perspective. Here, it is helpful to focus on *Satyagraha* (to hold on to truth) and (World) *Swaraj* (self-reliance, self-liberation or self-governance without any inhibition, suppression and oppression) as orientation for the interdependence of morality and consequent action. This understanding of Swaraj underlines the concentric meaning of Gandhi's societal perception and political organization. Metaphorically speaking, it is understood as an 'oceanic' concentric circle staring from the nucleus and encompassing the whole universe.

Satyagraha is often understood as the method of non-violence introduced by Gandhi, but it means more to hold steadfastly to the truth where social change is concerned. In that way, it is more of an attitude and principle of Ahimsa and equality, to have a clear orientation for one's paths and experiments with the self, the other and the world.

It is the circular reciprocity of Ahimsa, constructive equality and Satyagraha that calls for World Swaraj. To combine World and Swaraj arises from the understanding of Gandhi's philosophy. Gandhi used the very old term Swaraj in the context of de-colonialization and an overcoming of British/European civilization. Historically, it included the aim of returning to the very old Indian tradition of sustainable village republics based on handicraft and farming, which were thought to exist before the arrival of colonial power. This is an important reason why Gandhi selected the *Charkha* (spinning wheel) as a symbol of non-violent freedom-fighting, as the nucleus of sustainable economy. He focused on this as a vision for reinvigorating Indian textile production, which had been very successful before its destruction by the British, and to show the possibility of self-independence. Referring to Swaraj today could be misunderstood as national protectionism. But this stands in contradiction to Gandhi's vision of India's position in the world. I believe that he saw an India that was based in strong traditions as a constant model for the world concerning pure democracy:

> A free democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic co-operation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilising the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity (Gandhi, 1947: 17).

For me, it is difficult to conceive of the very visibly cosmopolitan Gandhi as a nationalist, which is what happens in actual power politics. But it is possible to perceive him in this way when people focus only on parts of his holistic concepts and neglect others. For example, when people focus on latrines as part of village sanitation (No. 6 in the Constructive Programme, see Gandhi, 1941) but forget to foster communal harmony (No. 1 in the Constructive Programme, see Gandhi, 1941). Here, it is important to keep Gandhi's rationale clearly in mind. It is contextualized within the paradox of British politics at the time: the friction of democratic civilization versus colonizing people. The nationalism of those days is meant as a resistance to overcoming oppression by remembering European civilization. In this way, I am convinced that Gandhi's nationalism is based on mutual internationalism for the sake

of the whole planet. Therefore, if Swaraj means self-liberation and self-government, it can move to a continuous path on the basis of Gandhian ethics. It implies true independence of any external forces concerning politics, economy, morality and other societal aspects (Gandhi's speech at Exhibition Ground, Faizpur, *Harijan*, 2 January 1937, CWMG 64).

Bearing this in mind, I summarize beyond the historic context. World Swaraj is a task for cosmopolitans of today. It helps in reflecting on external forces today, the rulers of the world and remembering one's common humanity. Here, Ahimsa, equality and Satyagraha show important ways forward.

Satyagraha and Swaraj are very much linked to *Sarvodaya* (well-being, universal uplift, progress of all, welfare for all) in a factual perspective. Basically, it encompasses three principles, based on Gandhi's reading of Ruskin's 'Unto this last':

> 1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. 2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work. 3. That a life of labour, i.e. the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living (Gandhi, 1954: 3).

Here, again, it is visible that equality as described in connection to Ahimsa and Satyagraha is the basis of the Gandhian understanding of society. To respect the work of any person as the work for the community is only possible if one can survive on it. In the first place, Sarvodaya seems to be understood economically. In this context, it can be understood as trusteeship as a possibility for economic equality. Gandhi believed that nature provides enough so that no one need starve and everyone can survive based on human conditions (*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted in Gandhi, 1947). In consequence, capital owners (as trustees) might get profit out of their business and take what they need to cover the production cost and as earnings. At the same time, the additional benefit would be distributed and reinvested for the welfare of the employees and people. So, in summary the basic challenge to reach true Sarvodaya lay in the unequal distribution of property and in the basic conflict of financial capital and labour (*Yeravda Mandir*, quoted in Gandhi, 1947). Constructive ways to overcome these issues are beyond class conflict and should be based on Ahimsa-connected non-cooperation ('Can you avoid class war?', *Young India*, 26 March 1931, CWMG 45).

Besides this, Gandhi is very much interested in realizing solutions based on the distribution of existing goods according to the fair needs of people ('Implications of Constructive Programme', *Harijan*, 13 August 1940, CWMG 72). This understanding is embedded in the readiness and capability of each human being to provide enough to fulfil basic needs (bread labour) by manual labour (handicraft and agriculture). It is connected to the basic principles of non-possession and non-stealing. Non-possession is related to all goods beyond basic needs. Non-stealing encompasses all structural denial of chances for a humane life by possessing more than is needed for one's own life (*Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted in Gandhi, 1947).

These concepts suggest that humanity is the starting point of the individual as part of a wider community, revitalized by every human being in every second of his or her life. Such a transformative understanding of humanity supports the idea of cosmopolitanism.

Socially, Gandhi's philosophical understanding is very much embedded in the concept of grassroots democracy as in his idea of decentralized Village Republics. Gandhi aimed to introduce autonomous and decentralized Village Republics (*Harijan*, 26 July 1942, quoted in Gandhi, 1947) contextualized by an understanding of a non-violent society based on cooperation ('The Charkha', *Harijan*, 13 January 1940, CWMG 71). He practised this life particularly in the communities of Phoenix Farm (founded in 1904) and Tolstoy Farm (founded in 1910) in South-Africa, and Sabarmati Ashram (founded in 1915) and Sevagram Ashram (founded in 1936) in India.

Ahimsa-based democracy should start in the villages (*Harijan*, 4 November 1939, quoted in Gandhi, 1954). There the *Gram Panchayat* (decentralized village self-administration) is the main body taking decisions after consulting the grassroots and trying to find solutions based on cooperation and consensus. In consequence, the assignment of representatives includes a continuous and constructive option of control, beyond mere delegation (*Harijan*, 18 January 1948, quoted in Gandhi, 1954). This understanding aims at complete liberation from external force. It means, in consequence, that the village as a unit of society is only responsible for itself and avoids regulation through a higher-level authority, which would foil the ambition for Swaraj ('Teachers Condition', *Young India*, 6 August 1925, CWMG 28). Village Republics as autonomous and decentralized units of the wider society create possibilities for democracy based on equality of all in all dimensions (Speech at prayer meeting, *Harijan*, 30 November 1947, CWMG 90). This is the context for the creation of equal and non-violent democracies at state and federal level. This includes abolition of untouchability (although banned by law, untouchability still plays an important role in the India of the twenty-first century) and a clear commitment to secularism (Discussion with Revd John Kellas,*Harijan*, 24 August 1947, CWMG 89).

What potential do Village Republics have today, as symbols of democratic and decentralized grassroots units in the world, especially for cosmopolitans? It would mean worldwide developments beyond megacities and it would imply that everyone should be able to live according to Sarvodaya, with decentralization and autonomy.

In trying to understand Gandhi's pragmatic vision of societal transformation, I have tried to remove these important terms from their historical context by transforming their meaning into something applicable to today:

1. Ahimsa and constructive equality (unity in diversity beyond equalization) are the spatial frame of a philosophical foundation for the transformation of the self and the society.
2. Satyagraha and World Swaraj are the process of development concerning a temporal transformation towards a just and sustainable society.
3. Sarvodaya is the focus of transformation with a factual perspective on all societal dimensions, starting from a pragmatic vision of a humane economy.
4. Grassroots democracy and decentralized Village Republics symbolize the possible nucleus of social transformation.

These four aspects form a circular and reciprocal understanding of societal transformation, as I understand Gandhi today (see Table 1, col. 4). In this way, clear reflective options are given to consider the Indian situation then as a call to the world to remember humanity and cosmopolitanism today. This is also the path to understand the transformative potential of Gandhi's educational foundation.

Table 1: Transformation, Gandhi and cosmopolitan education

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Transformation of …			**Gandhian transformation of …**		**Transformative cosmopolitan education**
	… society: world society	**… learning: challenges**	**… options: global learning**	**… the self within society: Social philosophy**	**… education: Nai Talim**	**World Nai Talim**
Spatial	Delimitation, glocalization and networks	Openness and containment	Glocal abstraction and concretion concerning global linkages and local anchoring	Ahimsa and constructive equality	Education for All	Universalization of non-violence and equality
Temporal	De-temporalization and acceleration of social change	Certainty and uncertainty	Sustainable deceleration and orienting positioning	Satyagraha and World Swaraj	Self-transformation through lifelong learning	Institutionalization of global ethics as continuous self-transformation
Factual	Complexity and contingency	Knowledge and lack of knowledge	Examples of cross-cultural and cross-sectional subjects	Sarvodaya	Handicraft as centre of interconnectedness and interdisciplinary approaches	Needs-based organization and handicraft soul-reliance
Social	Individualization and pluralization	Familiarity and strangeness	Cooperative plurality and action for the benefit of all	Grassroots democracy and decentralized Village Republics	Correlation of education and society according to living environment and needs	Interaction within the glocal learning village

Transformation of education: Nai Talim

Reflecting on *Nai Talim* today (Gandhi, 1951; Kumar, 1997) (see Table 1, col. 5) requires focusing on the developments and decisions around the Wardha-conference, from 22 to 23 October 1937, and after. The educational ideas are joined with experiences of Phoenix and Tolstoy farms in South-Africa or Sabarmati and Sevagram ashrams in India. It is important to consider *Nai Talim* as part of continuous further development according to 'experiments with truth' (Gandhi, 1927). This philosophical foundation is a leading message for educational activities. To highlight the implicit visionary pragmatism of the whole concept, it was helpful that Gandhi followed his belief of putting 'practical individualism' into action, that is, to transform theoretical findings directly into practice.

Historically taken, the understanding of education in relation to Nai Talim is 'character building' (Gandhi 1938: 89) beyond 'European civilization' brought to India in an oppressing way by British rulers (Gandhi 1938). It is a return to ancient Indian traditions dating back thousands of years ('Teachers' Condition', *Young India*, 6 August 1925, CWMG 28; Gandhi, 1938) and it should aim at developing both the body and the mind:

> … and keep[ing] the child rooted to the soil with a glorious vision of the future in the realization of which he or she begins to take his or her share from the very commencement of his or her career in school (Gandhi, 1941: 16).

Until 1966, Nai Talim was officially part of the Indian education system. From today's perspective, Nai Talim is assumed to have failed (Prakasha, 1985), although the 'Kothari Commission in 1966 [one of the most important education commissions often referred to in education statements to this day] paid tribute to [its] creative ideas' (Sykes, 1988: 86). If the failure is true, the reason for it might be neglecting to address the contradictory challenge of institutionalizing a process-based concept of continuous transformation, as explained above. Therefore, we can learn here that a reintroduction of Nai Talim and its modelling character in the world context would need a clear mission to accept education as a dynamic process beyond any fixed organization, and a clear commitment of teachers and learners to follow Gandhi's basic philosophical ideas, as explained above.

First of all, Nai Talim is a clear conceptual option for achieving 'Education for All', based on the principles of Ahimsa and constructive equality. This is the frame of a spatial perspective, being one of the main fields of activity according to international law, reaffirmed at the world education conferences at Jomtien (1990), Dakar (2000) and Incheon (2015) and in the Sustainable Development Goals (Datta, Lang-Wojtasik and Lange, 2015; United Nations, 2015).

Gandhian education aims to be in all areas and for all members of society to implement dynamic and visionary ideas of transformation to make India and the world a better place for all people. Nevertheless, this aim seems to be unfulfilled today in India, although there were many attempts in previous years (Lang-Wojtasik, 2001, 2013). It is still part of the debate in India – with much relevance for the whole world – as to what kind of education is attractive and feasible to bring nations and the world towards a growing globalization. Should it start from the needs of possible learners or from the needs of the economy? Should it be more at the grassroots level for the masses or supporting mainly higher education?

Starting from the pragmatic vision of Satyagraha and (World) Swaraj, Gandhian education begins with self-transformation through lifelong learning (temporal dimension). Here it is evident that, without a clear commitment to Gandhi's basic principles to education as a process-oriented aim, it is extremely difficult to develop successful education processes for the benefit of oneself and others. People have to be ready for continuous self-transformation as the context for societal transformation. In this way, education can serve as the nucleus for society to reach Swaraj in all dimensions.

The structure of Nai Talim has been described as lifelong learning in five steps: social education (adult education), pre-basic education (3–5 years), basic education (6–14 years), post-basic education (15–18 years) and rural university (Muniandi, 1985). From my point of view, the idea of self-transformation through lifelong learning requires that both aims and paths are congruent or even reciprocal and that the process-orientated nature of the approach is continuously contextualized in ethical principles and opens up spaces for the unfolding capability of experimenting.

All this was very difficult for the Indian Government implementing Nai Talim as an official education concept. Here, as well, it is crucial to understand the widening gap between the visions of India's development held by M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964, first Prime Minister of independent India). It is the underlying contradiction between the small-scale village industries favoured by Gandhi and the catching up and industrial development favoured by Nehru. Maybe this is also an important aspect of Gandhi's significance today. Here you find the contradiction between seeing him as the *Bapu* (father) of Indian history and the Indian nation, who helped to achieve independence from British power, and accepting him as the *Mahatma* (great soul) of constant social change in the sense of self and societal transformation. The latter would keep in mind that (World) Swaraj is always beyond nationalist thinking.

This understanding of education implies a continuous self-reflection as the basis of Sarvodaya to reach a just and equal society. A handicraft is placed at the centre of the education process to underline the necessity of interconnectedness (of theory and practice) and interdisciplinary approaches (to selected subjects and content), from a factual perspective. Alongside pragmatic reasons, the selection of a handicraft has a strong symbolic meaning as well. It underlines the will of autonomous self-financing and sustainable units within a Village Republic in sociopolitical terms. At the same time, the focus on a handicraft permeates village hierarchies, where handicraft was traditionally practised by lower groups of society including *Dalit* (downtrodden people, untouchables). Instructionally, it was possible to foster the discourse between school and surrounding community to handle handicraft concerns in connection with the necessities of learning aims and curricula.

Nai Talim's daily school-time was five and a half hours (Bartolf, 1993), giving opportunities to fit this into possible learners' daily routines. The interconnectedness of theory and practice was possible by putting the example of the handicraft in the center of activity-oriented didactic approaches. The subjects were arranged around this, being interconnected in an interdisciplinary way ('In Support', *Harijan*, 16 October 1937, quoted in Gandhi, 1951; Bartolf, 1993).

What does that mean in practice? Most probably, Gandhi had the Charkha in mind (factual dimension), when he put the handicraft at the centre of education, as he thought that Charkha was the only handicraft having the potential for universalization (Speech at Education Ministers' Conference, 29 August 1946, CWMG 85). Knowing about some Gandhian institutions in India, I would add the meaning of spirituality while spinning, as described by Gandhi or Vinoba Bhave (1895–1982), who was the initiator

of the Bhoodan-/land-gift-movement and the Gramdan-/village-gift-movement of the 1950s, as well as the *Shanti Sena* (non-violent Peace Army) (Bhave, 1994). At the same time, handicrafts have various forms and different potential to motivate children, youth and adults for education. Gandhi wanted to connect a selected handicraft with theoretical knowledge of subjects like general science, mathematics, mother-tongue, Hindi (one of the two official Indian languages), social studies or aesthetics (arts, music etc.):

> While learning carpentry, for instance, the child could learn something about the various kinds of timber, the places it comes from, thus acquiring some knowledge of geography (Prakasha, 1985: 8).

This holistic understanding of the handicraft reminds scientists of the idea of project method (Prakasha, 1985). Indeed, the idea of working on something as an interdisciplinary project is an integral part of many reform-oriented concepts, discussed in the Global North and South (Röhrs and Lenhart, 1994; Röhrs, 2001; Datta and Lang-Wojtasik, 2002). Maybe the Gandhian understanding of education resembles holistic approaches focusing on interconnections of mind, heart and hand. At the same time, a handicraft in the Gandhian understanding is not only a didactical tool but also a real production process. Even the self-sufficiency of educational institutions was realizable, which is not a main aim in the project method or holistic approaches.

In a country like India, or other countries of the Global South, we have to be very careful to foster the idea of the handicraft in the context of education, as too many children are often forced to do child labour without any educational impact (Kabeer *et al.*, 2003). Though it would be a clear disregard of Gandhi's aims, we should be aware that education around a handicraft could be misunderstood in this way.

At the same time, I see an impressive chance of education through a handicraft in the West and Europe. If it is taken as an interconnected and interdisciplinary approach, it offers many options to work on cross-sectional aspects, encompassing subjects concerning the survival of the planet – 'Epochaltypische Schlüsselprobleme' ('era-specific key challenges'; Klafki, 1996).

In Germany, it would be an interesting endeavour to introduce handicrafts into schools. One would have to be very careful in selecting which handicraft, as manual labour is disappearing for common products, which are often made elsewhere. As mentioned above, the Charkha is more than a production machine. It is an instrument to realize mindfulness within educational processes.

Besides this, it is impressive to perceive the correlation between education and society in terms of the living environment and its needs, by realizing the interaction between and cooperation of the individual and the collective and vice versa (social dimension). Interaction and cooperation with the physical and social environment would focus on school. Interaction and cooperation with the environment would focus on the relationship between school and:

- village: school sanitation (incl. health, hygiene, cleanliness), village cleaning programmes and annual school exhibition;
- nation: celebration of national festivals and birthdays of national heroes;
- local/regional surroundings as part of the bigger world: educational excursions, outdoor trips for observation of nature (plants, trees, birds, animals, insects), examination of local conditions (soil, rock, minerals), trips to vegetable, fruit and flower gardens, watching the flow of water in a river and the behaviour of floating objects and animals, watching the skies and the movement of the heavenly bodies;

- nature within: growing plants and planting trees, keeping pets;
- democracy within: student assembly to discuss school affairs along parliamentary lines and school court;
- physical effort: games and sports competitions;
- charity: organization of school mid-day meals as well as social service activities during epidemics, floods, earthquakes and fires, collection of funds or some other charity approved by the school.

(Re-systematization based on Prakasha, 1985)

Gandhi thought that education should be a genuine part of self-sustaining and decentralized Village Republics, as particularly outlined in the Constructive Programme (Gandhi, 1941). Schools, as a nucleus of these communities, also tried to contribute to achieve autonomy in economic terms (financial and material) through handicraft activities and other forms of labour (*Harijan*, 26 July 1942, quoted in Gandhi, 1947). Besides having an economic impact, the concept also seems to be important in educational ways. Teachers and learners get a chance to identify with their school (Prakasha, 1985), as the place of learning and a place of production and vice versa. Education through a handicraft, therefore, supports the 'village industries' at the same time. Alongside bread labour through agricultural activities, it is possible to work for the needs of the collective.

Although Nai Talim is a historic concept, it seems to imply innovative suggestions for today. This concerns the transformation of world society, the transformative potential of education and the relevance of Gandhi in thinking about transformative cosmopolitan education.

Transformative cosmopolitan education as World Nai Talim

The world is in motion and the foundations of enlightenment have started to shake. World society is a development fact and people will act as human beings within the anthropocene. This means humans created the actual situation and they are also able to find suitable and sustainable solutions beyond nation states. The societal transformation of today is a call for a sustainable change of consciousness. That includes educational options that assist change. People search for clarity of options, but mainly they find the manifold variations of possibilities and perceptions created by human beings a challenge. They want safety in handling danger but find anthropologically created risk as normality. They are in an anthropological search for security but find mainly uncertainty created by human beings.

World society as described above creates challenges for the description and perception of society as well as for the human beings supposed to live in an understandable and changeable world. Referring to the concept of global learning, we might understand four aspects of a future-oriented education concept (see Table 1). Spatially, people perceive delimitation and glocalization, leading to a need for handling the paradox of openness and limitation. Here, glocal abstraction and concretion help in reflection and action concerning global linkages and local anchoring. Temporally, people perceive de-temporalization and acceleration of social change, leading to a need for handling the paradox of certainty and uncertainty. Sustainable deceleration and orienting positioning are helpful to think about the place of the human being within the world. Factually, people perceive complexity and contingency leading to a need for handling the paradox of knowledge and lack of knowledge. Examples of

cross-culture and cross-sectional subjects offer reflective options for activities. Socially, people perceive individualization and pluralization, leading to a need for handling the paradox of familiarity and strangeness. Cooperative plurality and action for the benefit of all might be understood as reflective tasks leading to action.

Here, one can see feasible connections to an understanding of Gandhi's social and educational philosophy, having in mind constant transformation of the self within the world and through learning in a reciprocal and circular understanding. The spatial frame is characterized by Ahimsa and constructive equality as a pragmatic vision and reference in local, regional, national and global perspectives. This can be communicated today by digital media as well as personal encounter. To achieve this, the historic Nai Talim can claim to be an innovative model for the future. It is the clear aim to reach education for all as soon as possible, that is lasting and needs-based. In the temporal perspective, it is the call for Satyagraha as continuous and dynamic experiments with truth concerning the self, the other and the world. This might lead to World Swaraj, beyond a nationalistic understanding, as a clear statement and motivation to create self-reliance. This could be understood as another call for a *Jay Jagat* ('Victory to the world') to all people in India, Europe and beyond. The slogan was introduced by Vinoba Bhave as part of the Gandhian movements after 1948 and is still used in the Sarvodaya-movement. Through this, one can remember well the importance of Gandhian-based philosophy to overcome slogans like 'Jay Hind' ('Victory to India') or 'America First' (used by Donald Trump about the USA).

The Jay Jagat can be worked on through a clear understanding of lifelong learning for all at every possible stage. Here, it should be clear that aims and paths are congruent. Also, any movement should claim an ethical basis and approach today. Factually, this is interconnected with the aim of founding and reaching pure Sarvodaya, as needs-based welfare for all. This is very much connected to the selection of a handicraft at the centre of education. One can realize the interconnectedness of theory and practice by using something similar to the known project method in many reform-oriented educational concepts. It is also a call for interdisciplinary approaches to selected subjects and content. Socially, it is the pragmatic vision of grassroots democracy and decentralized Village Republics. This should be translated today as societal units, to find constructive ways of overcoming megacities from within. Here we find many options to correlate education with the surrounding society on local, regional, national and global levels.

Taking this as a basis to think about the consequences for world transformation, that is, globalization with a non-economic and humane face, what can we learn from Gandhi as a cosmopolitan, when we take the ideas outlined above as the basis for global citizenship education (UNESCO, 2015; Bergmüller-Hauptmann and Seitz, 2016) in a cosmopolitan way? Gandhi said: 'I have nothing new to teach the world: Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills!' (*Harijan*, 28 March 1936, 49, quoted in Prabhu and Rao, 1967: 25).

At least to debate a call for World Nai Talim is an interesting approach (see Table 1, col. 6).

- It would give the chance to frame all transformation activities in society and education as universalization of non-violence (Ahimsa) and equality in a constructive way.
- It would include the institutionalization of global ethics based on Satyagraha and World Swaraj as continuous self-transformation.

- It would mean establishing the needs-based organization of education beyond power hierarchies and establishing holistic learning approaches with a self-reliant economic and societal effect (handicraft-soul-reliance).
- And World Nai Talim interaction would be realized within the glocal learning village, that is, to use communication facilities in a global perspective to come forward as a global collective of people within the specific contexts of local units.

We can try to approach this understanding of education and its transformative potential for world society. Then we can create pragmatic visions of a pure democratic world. In that world everyone could get his or her place to fulfil their own needs, without being affected by the greed of the few. Then we can realize the opportunities to act in transforming our world into a better place for all.

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