

Project Based Learning School

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SUMMARY

Tapas is a project-based learning school in Bangalore that emphasizes student agency, holistic education, and real-world problem-solving. The school encourages learners to take ownership of their education, fostering creativity and collaboration through diverse subjects and projects.

- *Tapas offers a unique approach that values the child's voice and encourages accountability in learning.*
- *The curriculum integrates various subjects into project blocks, allowing students to apply their knowledge in practical contexts.*
- *Learners are encouraged to think critically about global issues and consider how they can contribute to society.*
- *The school environment is designed to be flexible and nature-integrated, promoting a sense of belonging and ownership among students.*
- *Project-based learning is seen as essential for preparing students for future challenges, connecting classroom learning to real-world applications.*
- *Mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities, fostering a supportive atmosphere for growth and improvement.*
- *The campus was developed with input from students, emphasizing their preferences for a bright, airy, and nature-friendly learning space.*

Speaker 1: Hi everybody. Welcome to my YouTube channel. Today we are talking about Tapas. It's a project based learning school in Bangalore. And you are going to get to hear from the facilitators, the founders and the learners at Tapas. Let's go. Hi Tia. Please tell me about your journey from homeschooling and now being at Tapas. How is your experience and how does it challenge you? And also you get so much freedom at school. So what do you think about that?

Speaker 2: Suppose so Unlike other students I was homeschooled for around nine, 10 years. And actually TAPAS is the second school that I joined. The first one was in London. So Tapas was the second school that I joined after nine years of homeschooling. And so I was actually the day I joined I was kind of curious about how this would be different from homeschooling because in homeschooling we have the full day free every single day. So 365 days, it's all free.

Speaker 2: We can do whatever we want, however we want. And so I was curious to see how it would be teaching me and but I was also super excited to finally be joining a school because it's fun. So one thing that I think has helped me after homeschooling is making new friends because I'm actually a bit of an introvert. So I was like at the first time I joined the school I was pretty shy. So like Tapas helped me make new friends in my class and even outside my class.

Speaker 2: And also I like how they teach every subject in detail. Like so we have science, we have project, we have English, we have math, we have Hindi, we have Kannada and we have sports and we have art and we have a lot of classes. And I like the attention that the school gives to every single project. Like there's, it's not focusing entirely on just one subject. Like we have many different subjects so it's very versatile let's say.

Speaker 2: So we have more project blocks because they teach, they're like mix of all the other classes. Like we use all the skills that we learned in science, English and all the other classes in our project. So a project is like a mix of everything. And that is like that's why we have more project blocks. But otherwise Tapas teaches every single class. And like, like before when I was in home school I used to pay more attention to maths.

Speaker 2: My parents used to teach me more maths and not really that much of science or Kannada or even art. But when I joined Tapas then I started learning more about These subjects. And that really helped because I mean when I grew up, I won't be using only maths in. In the world. Like of course I need science as well. And there's no way I can live in Bangalore without knowing Kannada. So I think normal schools like they, they don't give you as much freedom.

Speaker 2: Like everything is decided. What you're doing in class, how you're going to do it, what you. What's going to be your end product, if there is an end product at all. But in tapas, I think they give a lot more freedom than these normal schools. So for example, in English class just this year here, Prashant sir, who's our English teacher, came up to us inside. So we're learning, we're going to be learning. So we have these set of topics on what do you want your end product to be?

Speaker 2: That's it. Like, he did not make the decisions. It was up to us. And we said that we wanted to make a movie based on this novel. We had read Dora Chan and the decision was entirely up to us. Of course he gave feedback and some suggestions and all. But same for project class. We decided what our end product would be. And that's like so much freedom. Like, I don't think in any other schools they do something like that.

Speaker 2: That's really cool.

Speaker 1: Thank you so much. Please tell us about three things that makes tapas unique. Hi Ankita. Thank you for the question. It's very difficult to limit to three things because I can do ours to tell you about what's unique about tapas. One of the first things that we decided was it would be a model where the child's voice is going to be heard. We believe in asthitva, one of our panchadatus, where we say that a child is somebody today when they are at tapas.

Speaker 1: It's not about preparing the child for the world of tomorrow, but recognizing that the child is somebody today already when they are with us. So when we respect that learner, then you understand that they are capable of law a lot more things than we give them credit for. So the astitwa is something that we very deeply value here. Astitva is the being the person who is here with us today. And astita is also an acronym for the values that we stand for.

Speaker 1: For instance, AA stands for accountability, as is sustainability, T is teamwork, so on and so forth. So we ensure that it's not something which is just lip service where we're talking about it at a curriculum level. Or at a planning level. But this is woven into their daily routines, which ensures that learners are accountable. For instance, when we give out any assignment to be done at home, very specifically, we tell the parents that do not help the child with doing the assignment because we don't want to have pretty looking assignments or well done and no spelling errors kind of assignments.

Speaker 1: But instead we want to know exactly how much the learner is able to do without any support independently. And so the facilitator takes that feedback in the classroom and helps that learner. Now we are building accountability by the simple practice of saying that the learner has to take the onus of their work. So I hope this is one of the unique things that I can tell you about tapas. We are also looking at these learners going out into the world not as consumers, but as citizen.

Speaker 1: And so we believe do quite a few things to ensure that the consumer mindset is not developed in these learners. Because it's very easy in the world we live today to think about everything from the point of view of how that's going to benefit me. So for instance, when we looked at first grade science textbooks of different boards, we realized that science is approached, especially natural science is approached from the point of view of how it helps the human, human life.

Speaker 1: Like what is the benefits of a training or what are the benefits of the sun and things like that, as if they exist for us, for serving us. So we realized that the folly of introducing everything in the natural world to the child as a consumer. And so we said everything we do at tapas, especially in terms of science, has to be from an existential point of view that exists. So it's very factual that the sun is so far from the earth, etc.

Speaker 1: Etc. So the facts are introduced and not, not from a consumer mindset. To take this further, we said, if they're not consumers, then what are they? The learners at tapas, or they call themselves tapasvis. The tapasvis have to be citizen of the world. When I say citizen of the world, we realize that they should be thinking about how they can contribute to the world. So one of the first questions that we ask the students, the learners, when they come into tapas is we don't ask the learners, what do you want to be when you grow up?

Speaker 1: Instead we ask them, what problem of the world would you like to solve for when you grow up? And we document these year on year first day of school, we ask them what problem of the world they want to solve. And so they are tuned to not just thinking about, okay, I will grow up, I will work, I will earn money. And then it's a whole rat race that they are part of. But instead, as they grow, they are thinking about what problems they are solving.

Speaker 1: To take this a little bit further, during the year, every Wednesday, we have something called as the town hall. During town halls, our learners, there is usually a moderator, one of the learners, and then there is a record keeper, again, one of the learners. They table all the problems that they have observed that the school is facing. And so they cannot table individual problems. They will table problems like, you know, we need to have wonder if it was really funny that we need to have better hygiene in the washrooms.

Speaker 1: They observed that not everybody is able to keep the washrooms clean. And so that became a problem that they were all going to address together. They came up with fantastic solutions. They divided the number of booths in the washroom and they listed the children who are going to be using that particular booth. And so then now it was limited to who's going to keep it clean. So they found a way to solve the problem like this.

Speaker 1: The town hall every week ensures that they're not thinking of problems and saying, somebody else is going to solve it for me, but instead, what can I do to solve that problem? So this is how we are building the mindset of citizenship, which is completely different from consumerism. So this is another unique thing. At Tapas, when we decided that we want to take up something that is going to respect the child's voice, we looked at different pedagogies from across the world.

Speaker 1: And we decided that project based learning allows us to be rooted in real world situations today and use the real world to teach whatever other concepts. So it's very application based, plus it allows for a lot of agency, choice and voice for each learner. So we chose project based learning as the pedagogy, as the vehicle through which each child will get the respect that they deserve. Which means that we had to look at a lot of models.

Speaker 1: We went around the world, we have been visiting schools in multiple countries, looking at great models, models of where project based learning has been implemented. And we have brought that here. But that doesn't mean our job has ended. We continue to visit schools. In fact, even a couple of weeks ago, we were at Delhi visiting a couple of other schools. So our learning continues to grow. While we took the best practices from across the world, we are also very conscious that identity comes from who we are.

Speaker 1: So we are very rooted in the traditions of our country. Country so you can say that we are global. We're global as well as local. I know that is a very fancy word that is being used quite a lot. But I believe that we've, you know, that marriage has been working very well at Tapas so far. So we are trying to give them the global perspective by being strong about who I am, being sure about who I am in my identity of being an Indian.

Speaker 1: So this is what we have tried to achieve. And these are three unique things that I have mentioned. Thanks, Ankita. Thank you. Hi, Prashant. As an educator, how do you see project based learning shaping children's learning and future success? Also, tell me about some challenges you face here.

Speaker 3: So I really think that project based learning is the future of education. It is completely hands on. It situates all the concepts in a real world context. And I think that that's the most important because we're in an age where everything's changing. What people need to learn is changing, what kind of careers that the future holds is changing. So project based learning allows the learners to connect everything they learn in the classroom to the real world and what they can expect in the future.

Speaker 3: And I think that's the biggest formula for success.

Speaker 1: Thank you so much for answering that. I just had a chance to witness one of your classes. I thought that was really interesting because children have a lot of freedom of movement. They can ask you questions whenever they want. They can get up and go to the balcony whenever they want. So tell me, how does that work for you as an educator? What are some of the challenges that you face when you work in a set up like tapas?

Speaker 3: So definitely giving freedom to the learners comes with its own challenges. We try to encourage the learners to choose to participate in the class on their own. That does make it hard to manage the class at times, but it is rewarding because the child is curious to learn on their own and doesn't feel like they're being forced to sit in class. And that also allows me to kind of change the way I take the class based on each individual child.

Speaker 3: Some children are more kinesthetic in nature, which means they need to move around, they need to spend their energy. So if I notice that I might, you know, shift the tactic and give a very movement based activity or something that involves movement until they have used that energy and then they can. They're ready to calm down and sit down. And giving this choice to them at the end of the day allows them to feel like they are in charge of their own education.

Speaker 3: I think that's important. And the challenges are, of course, going to be there. One big challenge that I personally face is, is I have come from a very traditional education background, and so I feel like my expectation of education is very conditioned by that. You know, we need to sit in one place. We need to raise our hands all the time. We need to always write in our notebooks, always, you know, look at the board. And to come to a school like this where, you know, children are moving around, they're drawing, they're constantly experimenting with things, working with materials, making things and learning by doing really means that I have to keep my conditioning in check.

Speaker 3: And that's been a journey for me. And I am grateful to have learned, you know, this new way of learning at Tapas.

Speaker 1: Thank you so much. Hi, Tanmay.

Speaker 2: Hello.

Speaker 1: Can you tell us what happens when you make mistakes at Tapas?

Speaker 2: So at Tapas, we learn different and we do different things. So, like, in my old school, mistakes were not accepted. So that was little bit too harsh or that was harsh. So in Tapas, like, we learn from our mistakes, like, the mistakes we made. Like, many times I made a mistake which I can't recall. That mistake made me learn how to do that thing better. So many times, my friends, myself, we all made mistakes. Well, we learned from it a lot.

Speaker 2: A lot we learned from it. So, yeah.

Speaker 1: Can you give us an example of a mistake that you made here at Tabas? And then what happened after that?

Speaker 2: So the mistake I made was like, this happened when you were playing sports. So I was throwing the basketball in a way that it would never hit the hoop. But then I learned from my mistakes. My teacher, Gautam Imam, everyone taught me. My friends had helped me, and I could shoot better. And well, also another thing, like, I like to take feedbacks in a way, like, where it's really kind and helpful. Like, feedbacks are helpful, but in my old school, they were not.

Speaker 2: Like, they'll say, improve our handwriting, but how should we. Like, like, they didn't help us at all. Like, that was really bad. Well, now we get feedback, which is helpful and so nice. We. We also like. So we can come with a feedback on working on more drafts. Like, drafts helps us a lot. Like, in my English project, we needed to write many stories, novels and all. So for that, I took many drafts. Like, seven or eight drafts.

Speaker 2: We also did a project where we needed to, like, type out the first project, which is about cells, ecosystem, and everything. So we needed to type about that. Well, I took more than 10 drafts if I wanted to say that. So. Yeah. And also another thing is that we had in our sports day, we needed to design the certificates. Well, to design it, we needed a lot of things. Our teachers were beside us, they helped us.

Speaker 2: We got to know better feedbacks, and finally we got a masterpiece, which was so nice.

Speaker 1: That was great. Thank you so much for sharing.

Speaker 2: Can you please tell.

Speaker 1: Tell us a little about tapas, why tapas, the purpose, and also tell us how it's helping bridge the gap between what children need and what children are being offered in schools. I think that's a very big question with many, many things to talk about. It all started with one question that kind of burned a hole for us, where we were thinking about how today's education system was created in the 18th century, which is being taught by US educators and teachers and facilitators of the 19th century to the children, learners, students of the 20th century for lives and careers that they're going to pursue in the 21st century.

Speaker 1: So the question is, how are we really helping them? What are we really equipping them with? And especially during COVID I think a lot of parents attended online classes with their children and they saw that children are learning the same thing that they did. So it hasn't changed too much. And with the world changing so rapidly around us, I think it becomes more and more important that we help these children be prepared for the tomorrow, not just in terms of academics and knowing the what, but about how to be able to use that and implement that.

Speaker 1: So at tapas, we focus not just on the academics, but a very holistic approach where they are looking at the life skills that they require. They're looking at, you know, the values that they will be, you know, learning as part of their projects. Could you have imagined 9, 10 year olds organizing an entire event? Yes, our learners did that. They were the ones who organized an entire event for our earlier children and parents. Parents look for close to 800 people.

Speaker 1: They were the ones who planned and organized it. So when they had to plan about it, they had to think about how a child's body develops. They had to think about, is it balancing, is it hopping, is it running, walking? Then how do they measure that? They had to think about budgeting, planning. They designed certificates. I mean, they went on canva and they went into designing a certificate. Certificate. And we went back and forth with the feedback.

Speaker 1: Hi, Swati. Hi. Please tell us the difference between projects and project based learning. Yeah, thank you for the question. I think this is a common misconception. So it's great to clarify this. So projects traditionally are the way we had done projects, right? Which is we got an assignment home and our parents created something pretty for us to take back and when we made a presentation that we were trained on. So that is what I would think a traditional project is, while project based learning is almost a way of doing things.

Speaker 1: So project based learning, I would describe it as, you know, something that we basically where learners reclaim their space and ownership to their own knowledge so they are accountable to their own learning. We teach them how to approach knowledge, which would mean how do I learn something as opposed to what you need to learn? There would be a question that drives them and they go after the question and because of that question they. And in order to answer that question, they learn a host of things because they're internally driven to answer that question.

Speaker 1: An example of something like that could be what is it that you want to do to solve the waste problem? Problem maybe around the school. And it is a question because it, it's it that drives them because they really care very deeply about their school. So they want to, they want to find ways of doing it. They also want to understand where is this waste given coming from? Why, why, why is this happening? They understand segregation, composting, pollution, pollutants, what's happening in the air, what's happening in the soil.

Speaker 1: This is not something we are trying to teach them at all. Sometimes they go way beyond the syllabus, but because they want to understand the nature of the land they are operating in, so they go way beyond the syllabus. They continue that. That question stays with me. And they start seeing that question even in their homes. They start seeing this question in any other environment that they are put in. So now the question is an application based question.

Speaker 1: It's not something that they have learned so that they could make a pretty project or make a presentation in class. It's a learning that they've had that will be sustained through any environments that they may be exposed to. So that is in a nutshell, what project based learning would be where you are just exposed to a question and they answer that question. Now please tell me, what do you do to ensure you upscale yourself?

Well, I think that the job of a facilitator in a project based learning school can be extremely challenging because all of us have a background that we all have traditional schooling backgrounds.

Speaker 1: So for us to be in tune with what the children need is extremely challenging. But we're all extremely driven by the idea and the philosophy. So what we usually do is a. We are constantly in touch with what our learners need. They tell us what they're interested in, the problems that they are exposed to that they are driven by. The so one big thing that project based learning has given us as a philosophy is that we think this generation is extremely intelligent.

Speaker 1: These children can teach us so much and we learn from them. So they are our first source of skilling ourselves. The second thing is as a space, we are extremely reflective. We come together with a common drive that children need to be in a space that's freeing when it comes to their education. So we are having constant conversations about what's out there, what's latest if we don't know something. And that is something we genuinely believe. And there are lots of things we admit to the fact that we don't know a lot of things.

Speaker 1: And that helps us reach out to people who are skilled in their own spaces. So we take help and we have something called the circle of influence in within the school space where we are constantly, constantly observing each other. We're giving each other feedback. We're learning from each other. Since we and all of us have such unique skill sets. We also have very young teachers. We have teachers who have a lot of seniority. So all of us come together, learn from each other's experiences and do the best that we can for our learners.

Speaker 1: We really try and keep our learner in the center. That is the core of almost everything we do at Tapas. Thank you so much. Hi, Krishna. Hi. Could you please tell us about your favorite project at Tapas and what you loved there?

Speaker 2: So my favorite project at Tapas was the ice cream project a few years ago where there was this man, our client, he had ice cream shop in Rajasthan. But the problem was he wanted one in Bangalore. So we were split into groups and we decided to make our own ice cream project. In the end, he would decide whose would be the best. So we got to understand how to make a logo, a tagline and the color scheme.

Speaker 2: And we also made a cardboard mini design of our ice cream shop. So it was really fun making it all. And we understood about logos, taglines, color schemes and building.

Speaker 1: The campus is beautiful, lovely and inspirational. Inspiring. Can you tell us the story of this campus?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: So the story behind Tapas campus is very unique. So when we decided that Tapas campus has to get ready, what we did was we started an initiative called Jaga. So in the Jaga initiative, students or learners from across India took part. And the question that they were asked was, how do you they Would like their campus to

be what they want in a campus that they go every day to learn should be like. So you will be surprised with the answers that we got.

Speaker 1: And there was a panel of educationists, There were architects, there were counselors and parents also, as part of the JAGA initiative, we got to know that learners like to be amidst nature. Nature while they're learning. They wanted nature to be integrated with their learning spaces. And that is what we have done at us also. So if you see the campus, you will see that there is an indoor and an outdoor space inside every classroom. There is so much fluidity.

Speaker 1: So a classroom can be a classroom or it can be an art room. An art room can be a classroom. We have story wells, so we have breakout spaces, which the children can also use as collaborative spaces. We have the library, which is, according to children, they wanted it to be more bright, more airy. And also we have the maker space, the art village, which has a lot of features which can be used as seminar halls, it can be used as workshop spaces or just classrooms.

Speaker 1: And when we say classrooms, all the learning spaces at Tapas are well lit. They are bright, they are airy. This is one of the things that we are very proud of. We want the children not to be boxed in classroom. We want them to be all around the space. We want them to enjoy each space of learning, and it should bring them a sense of belonging in every space. It should be like they own the school.

Speaker 1: So we are very happy about that. And even inside the classrooms, if you see, or maybe many of the spaces, we have made sure that we have used local materials in each of our spaces. So these bricks that you see, these are the sand, the mud that has been dug out from here, and these are rammed mud blocks. So we wanted it to be local materials that has been used in our campus. So we have different art forms from different parts of India as part of the classrooms.

Speaker 1: So children are exposed to different things that they see around us. So this is about the Tapas campus.