School

Education for Democracy? Or, for what else?

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My experience with blended and integrated learning methodology

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How to make online learning interesting and inspiring to the children?

Writing School and college textbooks!
Issues in changing socio-political times!

There are controversies in writing new textbooks first, in the BJP-ruled times and now in Tamil Nadu with a new government in power!

The newly elected Government in Tamil Nadu has appointed a new chairman of the School textbook Committee and whose name has evoked controversies?

The new chairman is a public face mainly for his popular public speeches and he is known for his popular and somewhat humorous and highly populist words and phrases.

One reason for criticism is how participation in the recent elections as a canvasser for the incumbent Chief Minister.

That apart, he had, it seems, known to have made some derogatory remarks on the womenfolk of the society.

It would have been really nice and desirable if we can choose someone who has spent time in some foreign universities or have some reputation in scholarship and other skills.

Now education itself has changed a great deal. There are radical changes in the very pursuit of education at all levels of society.

There are also issues regarding the socio, cultural and the economic status of the families and the socio-technological inputs. That should ideally go into textbook making. Also, there is one pronounced issue of the medium of instruction.

Tamil language medium is also a high priority with the government and this is a long-standing issue and there are also demands to make Tamil the language of administration. And even the higher judiciary. So also there is this textbook committee that would also produce textbooks for higher education.

Can all these tasks be accomplished? This sort of committee has to plan and draw up a broad goal of planning a wide series of school textbooks from primary school to university textbooks.

One suggestion here:
Please invite some experts from some universities, one instance is the Cambridge textbook committees. And also some specialists to plan the science and one technology expert so that we as a modern society become more updated.

Also, considering Indian history and our current historical status as a former colonial society we need to look at the need to have a relook at the Indian historical narrative with a fresh look and a fresh bold independent world's big democracy, etc.

Also a need to bring in the English language as almost a second language and also some changes in the study of languages with English and some other international language like the Chinese mandarin so that Indian students get wide employment opportunities.

We should not follow the model we have followed so far , just to produce students for migration or for competitive exams for government jobs.

Today education has become just job-seeking exams. This is not education that would create a historically relevant open and liberal society. We need a great deal of radical thinking in textbooks making.

V. Isvarmurti
Founder & Chairman

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Education for Democracy? Or, for what else?

Yes, it is an obvious question but no one asks!

You all must be knowing that the New Education Policy(NEP) has been on the table, so to say, for quite some time.

But there is no takeoff, again, to ask an obvious question!

First, there was a long gestation period after the new government with Smriti Irani was appointed as the first HRD minister. There were so many changes in personnel at the high level. So many. Ministers as well.

Many experts resigned soon after they were appointed. Then the education ministers changed. The latest to go was one who fell ill and couldn't function as effectively as all wanted with the so many confusions and changes in the CBSE exams, dates, and conceptions and there were other delays at the other levels of the HRD ministry functioning.

Dr. K.Kasturirangan signed the report as the chairman and yet he couldn't push things. Further, the newly appointed secretary, one Mr, Khare promised action and yet things didn't move.

Of course, education in India is a very vast and complicated area with so many issues, ideas, ideologies, and also very many social structures and the class and caste and economic and social issues, education in India is also a vast and varied area of social justice, economic justice and economic opportunities and also castes and historic legacies.

In the West, USA, more so in UK, historic and class legacies have fashioned education policymaking. But in India, the colonial legacy had a great impact. Of course, it is now education in a democracy, however imperfect it is.

To put it in one word, here we think education in terms of getting a job in the government. The average mindset of an Indiana student or the parent is that education must be one process that should land the son or a daughter in a good career. The career of the young Indian student is so much dependent upon what the government can give by way of a place in a government school or a college and also what a particular caste or social status can give by way of reservation and quota.

UK Education model won't suit India anymore.

UK education model

Now, even in the UK, the government has entered the reputed institutions like Oxford and Cambridge with fixation of reservations to State schools, and thus this year, for instance, the admissions to Oxford are curtailed for foreign students under some clever turn of phrase of what constitutes merit.

In India merit is no merit but only a caste-based birth! And India wastes billions of pounds to the UK treasury.

So the question we asked at the beginning is what is education for? It is for jobs and jobs only. Whether the jobs land up today as hoped for is a big question and we dare to say no one has an adequate answer. Education has not shaped a new and progressive and liberal India yet, right?

Now, in India politicians play a great deal of politics with no purpose except to keep themselves in power, and for this goal only they promise the moon!

Corruption thrives! No one talks of this pervasive evil. Fears stalk.

Education now is a paid-for commodity and all sorts of people, qualified or unqualified have become a new generation of education entrepreneurs! It is this new education entrepreneur class that mint the money and thus Indian education today has turned out a new set of exploiters and the new generation of youngsters are caught up in a vicious circle of denied opportunities. And dashed hopes.

As things stand the Indian education scene is one of a great many inequities and injustices and also a rising poverty index of dashed hopes. With all these inequities education in quantitative terms has expanded, by leaps and bounds and there is much hope and a sense of positivity at all levels of education.

But education thinkers must. Come out with some bold and innovative ideas so that the much hoped-for transformation for the good of the citizens and also. The larger society, why even for the outside world and human community stand to benefit in all conceivable ways.

Education liberates manias everyone has said from ancient times to the present times.

Education has expanded everywhere and this impact we can see in the many revolutions that had changed our life and time in the present generation.

We see more educated and more qualified technocrats, the new IT billionaires, and no-IT billionaires must be well-educated and well-shaped citizens to become morally bold and upright citizens.

Education has a special task to perform.

It is here we have to specially convene a collective gathering of well-educated citizens to deliberate on what constituted a well-rounded education.

There is still poverty on a considerable scale. In TN, it is said there an 11% of people living under poverty. So, we have to open up more places for under-served sections of society. The political system must be cleaned up of corruption, black money, and unaccounted wealth.

Education must be based on moral principles.

Education ministers, at least, must be well-educated and qualified people.

There must be many freedoms, individual freedoms, and other freedoms like media freedoms.

Today the media is under must stress.

Also, the men and women at the top must be morally driven leaders.

The judiciary must be free of the many government restrictions. And so on and so forth.

For first time, more women teachers in schools than men

For the first time ever, women school teachers in India outnumber their male counterparts, according to the Unified District Information on School Education report for 2019-20. Of the 96.8 lakh teachers in the country, 49.2 lakh are women.

In 2012-13, there were 35.8 lakh women teachers across India against 42.4 lakh men — marking a rise of 37% over seven years. In the same period, the number of male teachers rose from 42.4 lakh to 47.7 lakh.

There is a catch, though: women teachers top the head count only at the primary level. The report points out that upper primary onwards, the number of male teachers remains higher. At the pre-primary level, there are over 1 lakh women teachers to 27,000 men. In Karnataka, 57% or 2,57,790 of the 4,50,592 teachers are women.

More male teachers in govt, aided schools: Report

The ratio is more balanced in primary grades, with 19.6 lakh women and 15.7 lakh male teachers. In upper primary classes, there are 11.5 lakh male and 10.6 lakh women teachers. From then on, the gap increases. In secondary schools, there are 6.3 lakh men and 5.2 lakh women teachers. In higher secondary, it's 3.7 lakh men and 2.8 lakh women. In government and aided schools, the number of male teachers is higher, while in private unaided schools, women teachers are ahead.

The trend of male teachers outnumbering women in higher grades is seen across states, with the exception of Kerala, Delhi, Meghalaya, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, among big states. In these, number of women teaching is higher than men even in secondary and higher secondary classes. "Any dynamic and vital profession, and I consider teaching as one, must have equitable distribution of men and women.

Children need to learn from teachers who can offer a male as well as female perspective. In younger classes, many schools in India prefer women teachers, since they are seen to be more nurturing. However, I think it's good for male teachers to demonstrate nurture too! Otherwise, we're demonstrating a sexist bias in favour of women teachers," said Maya Menon, founder director of Teacher Foundation.

"In higher classes, traditionally both male and female teachers are sought after. There are also differential salaries in India between primary and secondary school teachers," Menon said. This is not the case in other countries: all teachers regardless of e levels they teach require similar qualifications and, start with similar pay. "Male teachers in India prefer to teach in secondary school because they get paid more, especially with government scales...," she said.

Source: TNN

CBSE may allow its schools to adopt other boards too

According to CBSE affiliation by-laws 2018, a school affiliated with the board "is not allowed to have dual affiliation" i.e simultaneous affiliation with two boards "with the same set of infrastructure and land".

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is considering allowing affiliated schools to also be affiliated with other boards of education in the same campus, in an attempt to benefit students as well as schools, officials familiar with the matter said.

Under the current by-laws of CBSE, schools affiliated with it cannot have any other affiliations in the same campus.

If implemented, this means CBSE schools will be able to offer more options to students. The Council for The Indian School Certificate Examiniations or CISCE already allows this, with some popular CISCE affiliated schools offering popular IB (International Baccalaureate) or the International General Certificate of Secondary Education options.

A proposal to the effect was presented during a meeting held on June 30, the officials cited in the first instance said on condition of anonymity. One official who attended the meeting, said: "It has been proposed that the schools will have to take a no-objection certificate from CBSE for obtaining the affiliation from other education boards in addition to their existing affiliation with CBSE."

Another official, who also attended the meeting, added: "If implemented, separate faculty for teaching students from different boards will be arranged by the schools. The management and the principal can be common for the students enrolled under multiple boards."

CBSE is yet to release any official notification in this regard.

Terming the idea of having multiple boards "exciting", Tania Joshi, principal of The Indian School, said: "However, it is yet to see how practical it would be for a school to have multiple boards. If the staff, students, and administration would be able to adjust... But it will help students who switch between the boards after class 10. They will not have to change their school if it offers more than one board."

The move may be crucial for public schools in the Capital since the Delhi government is soon going to launch its own education board. However, several principals of government schools said it may also create confusion. Awadhesh Kumar Jha, school head of the Sarvodaya Co-ed Vidyalaya in Rohini's Sector 8, said: "It will definitely give more opportunities to students but managing it will be a big challenge for schools."

CBSE secretary Anurag Tripathi did not respond to requests for comment.

A senior CBSE official who asked not to be named, said the idea was floated after requests from schools across the country. "We are yet to discuss several aspects and all the pros and cons before implementing this. The discussion around it has been started," the official said.

By Fareeha Iftikhar

Source: HT

IB Diploma results 2021: Scores up despite Covid impact

Option of either exam or non-exam routes due to pandemic also leads to a rise in overall Diploma pass rate

The average score for the International Baccalaureate Diploma has risen on the previous year after candidates were given a dual route option of either exam or non-exam assessments in 2021 due to the impact of the pandemic.

Specifically, the average score for the May 2021 session was 33.02 points, up from 31.34 in May 2020. The diploma pass rate has also risen to 88.96 per cent, up from 85.18 per cent in 2020.

Over 170,000 candidates worldwide will receive their results for the diploma and career-related programmes from May.

This year the IB held a dual route for grading, with schools in some countries taking exams while others awarded grades through teacher assessment.

Out of 170,660 students, 104,275 were in the non-exam route and 65,576 in the exam route, with 809 split between both routes.

This year has also seen a rise in top scores, with 15,513 achieving 40-45 points, up from 9,701 in May 2020 and an average diploma grade of 5.19, up from 4.95 in May 2020.

Olli-Pekka Heinonen, director general of the International Baccalaureate, said the results were testament to the hard work of teachers and pupils across the world and also claimed the outcome also showed the new models for assessments created had worked fairly.

On the decision to adopt the dual route system, the IB Heads Council said: "We believe that the IB's approach to the May 2021 examination session – in which schools that could sit the exams did so – was the fairest possible solution.

"We also believe the non-exam route for allocating results to students who were unable to take exams was fair, clear and allowed for grades to be distributed that reflect their achievements and abilities."

By Catherine Lough

Source : TES

Only 39% schools in India had computers, 22% had internet connection in 2019-20

These figures, however, are an improvement from the previous year, the Ministry of Education's UDISE report said.

Only 37.13% of schools in the country had a functional computer facility, while only 22.28% schools had an internet connection in 2019-20, according to the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) Plus report released on Thursday. When it comes to government schools, only 28.55% of schools had functional computer facilities, and 11.58% of schools had internet available, the report said. These numbers, however, are an improvement over the previous year, with computer facilities going up by about 6%, and internet connectivity improving by about 3.5%, the report said. The report also said that around 90% schools had hand-wash facilities in 2019-20, a major improvement from 2012-13 when it was just 36.3%.

More than 83% schools had electricity in 2019-20, an improvement by almost 7% over the previous year, 2018-19. However, a functional electricity connection was available in only 80.16% of schools. In 2012-13, about 54.6% of schools had electricity, according to the report. More than 84% schools in India had a library or reading room or reading corner in 2019-20, an improvement of nearly 4% compared to the previous year. "In 2012-13, about 69.2% schools had a library/ reading room/ reading corner," it said.

More than 82% schools conducted medical check-ups of students in 2019-20, an improvement by more than 4% over the previous year, 2018-19. "In 2012-13, about 61.1% of schools conducted medical check-ups for students," it said. A functional drinking water facility was available in 93.77% of schools. A functional girls' toilet was available in 93.23% of the girls' schools and co-education schools, while a functional boys' toilet was available in 91.07% of the boys' and co-education schools. Only 20.66% of schools have a functional toilet for Children With Special Needs (CWSN), and 43.73% of schools have ramps with handrails for Children With Special Needs.

The Unified District Information on School Education (UDISE), initiated in 2012-13 by the Ministry of Education by integrating DISE for elementary education and SEMIS for secondary education, is one of the largest Management Information Systems on school education covering more than 1.5 million schools, 8.5 million teachers and 250 million children. UDISE Plus is an updated version of UDISE.

Source: The News Minute

Record set to tumble as 682,000 students apply to UK universities this year.

Nearly half of school leavers seek university place, with nursing and medicine seeing rise in popularity

Nearly half of school leavers seek university place, with nursing and medicine seeing rise in popularity

School leavers across the UK have shrugged off fears about the continuing impact of Covid and applied for undergraduate places in record numbers, according to data from Ucas, the university admissions administrator.

The admissions service said that across-the-board increases in applications and offers of places meant the highest ever number of students would be starting university or college courses in the autumn, with particularly high rates of applications coming from women and sixth-formers.

The push for places suggests students in England are undeterred by the government's repeated warnings about "low-value" degrees that offer little boost to graduate pay, or by the prospects of student loans of more than £40,000 on average by the time they complete their degree.

Ucas said 311,000 UK 18-year-olds had applied for higher education places by its deadline at the end of June, 10% more than the previous record of 281,000 last year. More than 50% of school leavers in Northern Ireland have applied for university places, and 44% in England.

The total number of applicants through Ucas, including mature and international students, also hit a new high of 682,000, with a record 400,000 women applying.

The pandemic appears to have encouraged record numbers to apply to nursing courses: nearly 66,000 people of all ages have sought places this year, a 19% increase compared with 2020. Applications for medicine and dentistry places were up by 23%.

Universities have responded to the extra demand by increasing their offers of places, including a 20% rise since 2019 in offers to students living in disadvantaged areas. Ucas said it had also seen record traffic and applications on its site for degree apprenticeships.

"These numbers show the clear demand for undergraduate study and apprenticeships is growing, rising significantly during the pandemic," said Clare Marchant, Ucas's chief executive.

"Universities are ready to welcome more students on to courses this autumn and have worked hard to be flexible, enabling students to progress to their next level of study."

The Association of School and College Leaders warned that universities needed to prepare for the "significant educational disruption" experienced by the new cohort since March last year.

"Despite the best efforts of schools and colleges, the learning of students will have been affected to a greatly varying extent, and the mental health and well-being of many young people will have been impacted by the pandemic," the group said.

Hollie Chandler, the head of higher education policy for the Russell Group of leading research universities, said: "The increase in offers by higher tariff providers to UK 18-year-olds, including those from the most deprived areas, reflects our universities' commitment to be as fair and flexible as possible to ensure students are not disadvantaged in their applications by the changes in the awarding of A-levels this year."

Jo Grady, the general secretary of the University and College Union, said the record numbers of places being offered were not being matched by higher levels of staff employment, pointing to redundancies and course cuts at universities across England.

"Ultimately, cuts impact on students as staff become increasingly stressed and burned out, so it's important that universities match increased student numbers with increased investment in their staff," Grady said.

But she said it was encouraging to see increases in the numbers applying to study humanities, social sciences and creative arts across England, despite the government's attacks and funding cuts aimed at these subjects.

"If ministers are serious about delivering a strong post-pandemic recovery, they must abandon all proposed funding cuts to the arts and take action to bolster this vital sector of the UK economy," Grady said

Source : Guardian

The survey was conducted by Institute of Social Education, a non-governmental organization, which is working with teachers to find the prevalence of substance abuse among school-going children

➤ The survey was conducted randomly among 3,021 students in Classes VI to XII in Chennai, Tiruvannamalai and Ooty districts in April 2020

➤ The survey found that of 3,021 students, 256 (9%) were addicted to substances such as tobacco, alcohol, cool lip capsule and ganja

WHEN DID THEY ABUSE IT?

30% of students said they used the substances during holidays

32% when they were with friends

27% used daily

11% used it when they were alone

PARENTS NOT AWARE

16% of the students said their parents were aware of the substance abuse; **84%** said they continued the habit without the knowledge of families

Illustration: Shinod Akkaraparambil

SUBSTANCES ABUSED BY STUDENTS

- Other intoxicants **6%**
- Ganja **10%**
- Alcohol **26%**
- Cool lip capsule **23%**
- Tobacco products **22%**
- Whitener and rubber solutions **13%**

STATE OF MIND

42% of students said they used the substances/drugs when they are happy

40% when they were sad

16% when they felt insulted or were abused

2% took the drugs/substances when they were afraid

REASONS THE STUDENTS CITED FOR THE HABIT

Peer pressure | **45%**

Easy access and availability of intoxicant/drug | **21%**

Out of curiosity about the substance | **17%**

Because they felt isolated | **12%**

Because they could afford to buy it | **5%**

ADDICTION MORE IN OLDER STUDENTS

Substance abuse was higher among higher secondary students. Of the 256 who admitted to be addicted to intoxicants, 140 were in Classes XI & XII; 90 from Classes IX & X; and 26 from Classes VI to VIII

FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION

A **report** based on the survey findings **will be submitted to the state school education department** to monitor shops and vicinity of schools to **curb peddling of such intoxicants**/ drugs, and to provide guidance and **counselling** to the affected students once schools reopen

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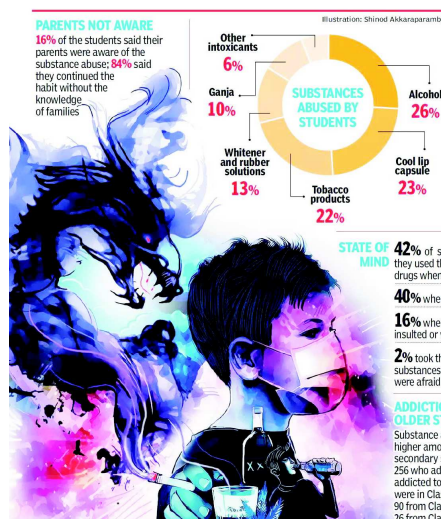
A gaana song opens with a chillum being passed around by people smeared in ashes. The video plays on with the lyrics peppered with references to different types of intoxicants. Glimpses of joints being rolled flicker on the screen and the lyrics extol the "good effects" of smoking ganja. Songs like this are popular among adolescent children, many of whom fall prey to substance abuse, initially getting into it out of curiosity and because of peer pressure.

It's not only ganja. A survey conducted by non-governmental organization In-

young children," she said.

R Siva, another teacher, said songs promoting ganja are getting popular among school children on video streaming platforms. "After the online classes, students are viewing these types of songs," he said. "Students are now exposed to so many undesirable things through streaming platforms and other mediums as parents start to go back to work. Students from elite backgrounds

9% school kids in 3 Tamil Nadu districts addicted to intoxicants: Survey

stitute of Social Education in three districts in April last year found that 9% of school children (Classes VII to XII) were addicted to substances such as alcohol, cool lip (a tobacco-derivative) and cigarettes, besides ganja. The NGO took the help of teachers to conduct the survey among 3,021 students studying in 168 schools in Chennai, Tiruvannamalai and Ooty districts.

Of the children who admitted to substance abuse, 26% said they were addicted to alcohol, 23% used cool lip, 22% smoked or used other tobacco products, 13% sniffed whitener and rubber solution, while 10% smoked ganja.

The reasons for substance abuse were varied - 45% said it was because of peer pressure, 21% said it was because of easy access, and 17% said they tried out of curiosity.

Kurinji, a school teacher from a school near Chennai, said petty shops near schools were encouraging children to get their peers to try cool lip. "It all starts with a cool lip capsule to which some primary students are also addicted. The petty shops give one sachet free to students who bring others. The state government should conduct a major drive throughout the state and seal the shops which sell this substance to

or from nuclear families are especially vulnerable. Parents need to spend quality time with their children," said N Vijayan, senior principal of Zion and Alwin group of schools.

"The state government needs to monitor petty shops when schools reopen. Teachers need to be trained on prevention of substance abuse and the government needs to appoint a counsellor at block level or district level," said J Shiyam Sundar, director of Institute of Social Education.

Cutting access to drugs key, say experts

From giving individual attention to students to training teachers to strict implementation of legislation, experts have various suggestions to prevent substance abuse among children.

With schools expected to reopen, handling substance abuse problems may become a bigger challenge for managements.

Chitra, a teacher, said proper care and attention to individual students can help. "We need to show love to provide emotional support to students," she said.

Many teachers say schools alone cannot put an end to this. "The government

along with law enforcement agencies need to make sure these substances are not available," said one.

V Surendran, associate professor and head of Psycho-Oncology and Resource Centre for Tobacco Control, Cancer Institute, Adyar, said many use substances such as cool lip due to peer influence. "It is not the responsibility of just the government, policy makers and enforcement officials, teachers and parents are responsible too," he said.

The centre is conducting intervention sessions in schools and creating awareness among teachers about effects of tobacco. "Parents need to spend adequate time and observe what their children do. Is there any smell coming from them? What is in their pocket? Parents and teachers need to be more vigilant and help the children learn things for lifeskill development," he said.

Another psycho oncologist, E Vidhubala, said there was a shift in the way tobacco is being promoted among children. "Tobacco products and narcotics such as ganja are everywhere. Petty shops sell cigarettes and other tobacco products to all age groups." Stringent implementation of legislation is needed, she said.

Akila Radhakrishnan, social policy specialist, Unicef (TN), said: "During the pandemic, we conducted E-consortium, a webinar series in which the topic was discussed with government school teachers. We are preparing a policy advocacy report on adolescent responses planning, in which the issue will be a part."

By A Ragu Raman

Source: Times News Network

Online teaching to stay, say university leaders in England

" The assumption that this blended approach, somehow will be not quite as good as we used to have when it was all face-to-face" was wrong" says professor.

Students in higher education will learn better with parts of some courses continuing to be taught online, university leaders in Wales have said.

Swansea University vice-chancellor Prof Paul Boyle said students would benefit from the "blended approach" to learning used during the coronavirus pandemic.

Cardiff University's Prof Colin Riordan said "some things work better online, especially some large lectures".

They were addressing the House of Commons' Welsh Affairs Committee.

"I actually think the provision we will have going into the future will be better for students, rather than worse," he replied.

Prof Boyle said the "assumption that this blended approach, somehow will be not quite as good as we used to have when it was all face-to-face" was wrong.

"We will have a better provision, where we will choose carefully what can be done more effectively online, but really make use of the time that we have

available for the other types of learning where students really get the most benefit from smaller class sizes, from interacting more closely to their tutors and other academics," he said.

"I'm convinced that what we need to do as we go forward is project to that community of students what a valuable education they're going to get as a result of the changes that we've learned we can now accommodate."

Professor Paul Boyle said online learning offered "all sorts of opportunities"

Prof Boyle told MPs there were also "real opportunities to collaborate across institutions" with teaching.

"We now have the opportunity to do that much more flexibly, because we can now use online measures to bring academics from Aberystwyth into Swansea, from Bangor into Cardiff and so on," he said.

"So there are all sorts of opportunities that open up to us now, in a way that perhaps did exist before the pandemic but we weren't taking advantage of them in the way that perhaps we could have done."

'Students very, very keen to be back'

Asked by Mr Crabb if students would be "dialling in via Zoom for their lectures in perpetuity now?" Prof Riordan said: "I think that elements of it certainly will stay because what we've show is that we

actually can deliver whole elements of degree programmes, certainly one-and-a-half years of them, via remote means and we can achieve the learning outcomes."

However, he added: "Students clearly still want the on campus experience, they're very, very keen to be back.

"Our students have been in Cardiff, many of them on campus and attending lessons, depending on the subject, throughout the pandemic.

"But what we have learned is what is possible and that some things do work better online, especially some of the large lectures."

Prof Riordan said there was now the ability "to devise new programmes for new sets of students we wouldn't have been able to access before".

"So I think there's a recognition that a combination of in person and remote learning is now possible.

"And you can go either in one direction where nearly everything is in person, which you'd expect from medicine and dental. that kind of thing, or you could be putting on new programmes in data science or something like that, which which is entirely online, if you want to do that."

Source : BBC

Only 27% of students think university 'good value' during pandemic – survey

Students wanted more face-to-face classes and thought fees not value for money in the pandemic

Only about a quarter of students in the UK think they got good value for money from university during the pandemic.

An annual survey found students felt their fees and living costs were not justified by the disrupted teaching they received this academic year.

Students were particularly aggrieved by a lack of in-person teaching, found the survey of 10,000 students from the Higher Education Policy Institute.

Universities UK said the results were "disappointing, albeit not surprising".

One comment was: "Fees have not changed even considering the changes made with Covid." Others included: "Everything seems too high a price for what we are receiving" and: "Because of Covid I haven't met any of my classmates or tutor."

Lack of contact

These were the lowest-ever satisfaction ratings in the think tank's survey going back to 2006.

There were 27% who thought they had good or very good value, down from 39% last year - with the pandemic putting much teaching online and students unable to socialise on campus for much of the year.

- Petition over lectures still online next year
- Students say they are ignored over fee rebates
- Students fed up with more online lectures
- Students felt they had missed out on learning alongside other students and talking to staff face-to-face - and more than 40% wished they had either de-

ferred a year or taken another course or gone to another university.

The worries about poor value included:

- Tuition fees and living costs

- Lack of in-person classes

- Teaching quality

- Course facilities

Student view:

'They just want us to shut up'

"It's definitely not been value for money," says Beth Stevens, a student at Lancaster University.

She only went to one in-person class in a first year so disrupted by the pandemic that she's decided to take this year again.

"I felt like I had imposter syndrome," she says, about the university year that "didn't feel real" - at home or online for much of the time and following a previous year in which she didn't take her cancelled A-levels.

"It was really hard to meet people," she says, and she would have much preferred to be taught in-person rather than online, where she found the teaching less effective.

She also wanted to get involved in sports and that was difficult too. Students have faced full tuition fees despite many having to learn online for much of the year

Beth says universities had promised a blend of online and face-to-face teaching, but in practice, for her geography course, it turned out to be much more online.

"They wanted us on campus - so they said there would be a blend," she says.

Other students had many more lessons in class and she says that it was unfair to charge the same fees - students should receive a significant rebate on fees and rent, she says.

She's annoyed at what she sees as unfair

treatment: "I feel we've been shoved to one side. They just want us to shut up really."

Students in England, who pay the highest tuition fees in the UK of £9,250, were the least likely to say they had good or very good value, at 24%.

In Wales, where fees are £9,000, 29% said they had value for money and in Northern Ireland, where fees are £4,530, 27% said it was good or very good value.

However in Scotland, without tuition fees but with costs such as rent, 50% thought they were getting good or very good value from their courses.

Mental health

There were also concerns about well-being. More than a quarter of students had considered leaving their course - and the biggest cause for this was worries about mental health.

The survey revealed differences in perceptions over racism - with white students much more likely to believe that their university was committed to tackling racism, while black students were less likely to be so convinced.

Nick Hillman, director of the Higher Education Policy Institute, said it was important to "capture students' real views in a year when students and staff have faced unprecedented challenges".

But he said it was not all negative - with much high-quality teaching and learning, despite the disruptions that universities faced.

Next year the amount of face-to-face teaching should increase, said Alistair Jarvis, chief executive of Universities UK.

"It is valuable to hear student views on the past year which has been far from the 'usual' university experience," he said.

"This has been a very difficult time for students, which is why we recently made an additional £85m available for those students most in need, on top of an existing £256m that universities can draw on," said Universities Minister Michelle Donelan.

By Sean Coughlan
Source : BBC News

Ms. Anita Mishra

Dean Academics and HOD Biology and Bio-technology at Birla Balika Vidyapeeth, Pilani.

There should be no elaborate teaching from the stage by the teachers rather the learners should go for learning everything by experiencing things by themselves. The focus has to shift from rote learning to doing and learning.

As an ardent educator, I would like to share my thoughts and views on imparting 21st century skills to the students and making them future ready. I want to enumerate how Sherlock Holmes was not good or had limited knowledge in various subjects, but he had the astute observation skills, critical skills, and analytical skills needed for his profession. These skills are needed very much for the 21st century learners also if they have to shine in their future endeavours. They have to be sharp in acquiring these skills.

National Education Policy aims positively at reforming the entire educational system in India. It plans to take out the rote learning method from the students and wants them to gain knowledge from experiential learning. There should be no elaborate teaching from the stage by the teachers rather the learners should go for learning everything by experiencing things by themselves. The focus has to shift from rote learning to doing and learning. The students have to become innovative. That is what has happened in this pandemic condition. Not only the students, but even teachers also adapted so well to the situation. They are smart to pick up things brightly during the current pandemic situation when the whole world was suffering and did not feel they are victims of any cybercrimes.

The revised National Educational Policy we wants to reduce the content. There would be key concepts that would be taught by the teachers. The idea of the curriculum will be given to the students, and they have to apply the same in their daily life to solve the problem. Emphasis will be more on their critical thinking with holistic approach of education. It is going to be inquiry, discovery, discussion, and analysis-based learning that will take the fore seat.

The 21st century skills that prepare the students for the opportunities and challenges are divided into three categories. The first one is the learning skills that enable the students to acquire knowledge from various sources which are of 4Cs. The next one is the literacy skills that help them to create and gain knowledge through media and Information technology. The third one is the life skills which enables the learners to live their day-to-day life. When they learn these, they will be comfortable in life.

Among the 4 learning skills, critical thinking is very important for the students, and they should be taught to go for the critical thinking. There should be no rote method, and students have to come up with solutions. They have to create knowledge through various resources. They should get the responsibility of learning with the help of teachers and come up with solutions. Collaboration is important in learning skills of the educators to impart in this era. The communication skills of the students should also be improved as they need to know how to communicate effectively with others.

IMT or Information Media Technology makes the students improve their literacy skills through information from newspapers, books, internet, radio, television, and many more. This is considered yet another type of 21st century skills. The students should learn the life skills to lead their life in the current era which is changing drastically. They should be flexible and adaptable, and to cultivate this quality, the educators have a major role to play. The learners should be flexible enough to adapt to the changing things and be smart enough to accept them. Else they will be eliminated from the system. Learners should be taught to be leaders, and we have to prepare them to lead the world. The educators should help them take the initiatives, failing which the world will not change. They

With teaching experience of 28 years in various CBSE and ICSE schools, she is passionate about practising innovative pedagogies in teaching learning and has many accolades and awards to her credit. She was awarded Best Teachers award by CBSE in 2019 and British Council International Schools Award as Coordinator in 2015 and 2018 for her successful implementation of International Curriculum transaction pedagogy. In a recent interview, she talks about the 21st Century Skills- Learning skills, Literacy skills and Life Skills needed for a student to be future ready.

will be at a loss. They should be productive and achieve sustainable development. Of late we find learners lacking social skills. They do not come out to play and have to be pushed out to mingle with their friends. Educators have the duty of making them come together physically and interact. This skill needs to be imparted to the learners as part of the 21st century development.

The learning skills comprise of 4Cs and how the educator can impart these skills.

1. Critical thinking: This skill can be imparted to the learners by organising panel discussion. The students can be given a topic and asked to go for group discussion, pose questions, and asked to speak on the given topic, get case studies and analyse and come up with solutions. They can be given research-based investigatory projects, on which they have to do survey, get data analysis, and come up with solutions. They can also be part of crosswords, sudoku, puzzles, and riddles. According to Christopher Hitchens, "Essence of independent mind lies in what it thinks and not in how it thinks."

2. Creativity: A certain situation has to be given to the students. They should go for situational drawing and show with their creativity how they would behave under various circumstances. They can be asked to draw images and discuss with others about the various topics which is a beautiful exercise. They become creative and learn a lot. Graphic and infographic designing, sculpture, pottery, craft, and photography can be encouraged to exhibit their creativity, rather it can also be taken as a vocation. I like the term SCAMPER from CBSE handbook, which is Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put, Eliminate, and Reverse. The child should be allowed to create alternative things and imagine the scenario if roles are reversed. They should be exposed to different 3D images under project based learning and virtual learning. They should be creative, and teachers have a role to make them do so. Albert Einstein says, "Creativity is contagious, pass it on." The teacher should be creative and make the learners also creative.

3. Collaboration skills: This helps in team building. Students should go for art integrated hands-on projects. The teacher can give a task which can be done by groups of students to be accomplished in parts, and you will be surprised to see the entire task getting done so well. Treasure hunt activity can help the students to build team and collaborate with them. They can be encouraged to play dumb charades as that helps them to become smart enough to understand what the other member says by action. They learn many things from search to win game when the teacher gives problems to them to come up with solutions. If they are unable to do so, the teachers can give clues. Steve Jobs puts it, "Great things in business are not done by one person. They are done by a team of people." If we want the country to be great, we should work in team.

4. Communication skills: Teachers can encourage the learners to do dramatics, mimicry, role play and caricatures. We can even ask them to take class for a day. The students will learn to communicate the topic. They can be part of panel discussion and group discussions. Teachers can encourage them to learn the communication skills through activities like a Radio Jockeys, by speaking on a given topic within a limited time. The learners can also have pairs and make pair talk on the topic within a given time. It improves their communication skills. As per Ralph Emerson, "All great speakers were bad at first." It is only through the support and exercise the skill can be built.

Apart from the above, the students should gain literacy or information skills. They have to gather information from digital and other sources, authenticate the facts gathered by them for credibility and accuracy, and learn to use the information to persuade, explain, and create the knowledge on their own by their research work using resources.

Media literacy is also needed for the 21st century learner. Students should learn about different means of mass communication. Once they have got the information, they should go for checking the facts. Teachers should promote awareness of the influence of media on students and how the information from the media can be used more adequately.

Technology literacy should be used to get students trained in using the online resources judiciously. The teachers should teach them to create and share the resources and collaborate the same. They should be taught to use the technology with adequate knowledge, be aware of cyber safety, and cyber laws, apart from copyright issues. They have to collaborate and share the resources. There should be awareness of the cyber laws and cybercrimes.

In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "Do not believe everything on internet just because there is a picture next to it." So the learner should understand that all information on the internet is not authentic and reliable to use. They should be capable of judging which knowledge is authentic, which can be helped by the teachers.

I want to emphasise on the 21st century life skills the most important ones.

Flexibility: The learner should be given a part of the knowledge in the classroom, and they should do the other part at home. Flipped classroom approach can be followed. Teachers should be adaptable to the resources available, use general articles for resources, and also create resources that the children will learn from. There are many beautiful innovative things that can be developed such as designing new games on internet, role change in group activities etc. They should become flexible and adapt to the roles.

Leadership: The learners are the future leaders of the world. Students should be made leaders. They can participate in round table conferences on various topics like solving pandemic problem or climate change, create a model united nations where they can debate, these will enhance their public speaking. They can lead quiz programs. Teachers can make them participate in soap box activity to speak on a particular topic and thus groom them as leaders. The students also can participate in team paper presentation, skit, role play etc.

Initiative: They should come forward for the role play, to take part in class magazine, and every child has to contribute to newsletter. This will help the learners to become proactive. They will take initiative in the class, and they can even be given a chance and allowed to conduct assembly.

Productivity: Productivity helps the learners and the school to grow in the right direction. They should exhibit their productivity by taking part in school fairs, expos, research projects, and celebrating readers' week with the wall magazine designed based on the book read by so and so. They will be monitored and guided by the teachers.

Social skills: It is the teachers' responsibility to make them come together. Cultural relay is to let the team of children be active, such as acting as each state and explaining about it on their own. In a circle time, they can come together and tell the audience about the positive points of others. Everyone feels elated when their positive points are disclosed by others. By playing copycat, the teachers can train them to copy each other as day-to-day exercise which will help them get used to bullying, and they will never feel for the same again.

Listen to the full conversation at www.indiaschoolnews.com

Nandita Naresh

How to make online learning interesting and inspiring to the children?

Ms Nandita, when talking about the current affairs in educational field, regrets that we are currently going through a difficult time due to the pandemic. She wants to make online learning fun loving learning for the children. According to her pre-primary children are the most pleasurable lot as they inspire the teachers a lot while teaching them.

She points out that due to the current situation, learning is not happening in the schools, and everybody are forced to take up the online education, not only students but also teachers. The pandemic has taught the students and teachers how to cope with the hindrances in life and make the best use of the opportunities available online and offline in our life. For that Ms. Nandita feels that teachers should make learning full of fun for the children.

She has interacted with pre-primary children many a time and felt that being in a class is the best way to learn. They would have had books and materials and other kids to learn together. It is not the situation anymore now. Everyone is segregated in their home. Workplace has been brought to the homes, and everyone is locked up in their houses. But the situation has given us an opportunity to try our best ability.

Some have picked up gardening, others musical instruments, and thus their hobbies and interests have been nurtured in the last one year. The first 3 months of the pandemic was good as everyone was together. But once the lockdown started it was not the best, but people had to get used to it. All the teaching was supposed to be done online. Many ideas such as audio lessons and video sessions were given. Zoom came as a blessing to everyone along with google apps like Gotomeeting. The teachers could see the children and exchange ideas apart from teaching them.

It is Ms. Nandita's strong opinion that we are getting addicted to what we were not supposed to. Many elders had said that it is harmful to get addicted to mobile and laptops. But everyone has been hooked up to this technology because of the pandemic. Elders had their jobs at home, and to accommodate the classes for their children, had to buy new laptops, desktops, mobiles, or tabs. They had to work on other technological aspects at home.

It was not only children, but even elders got addicted to these gadgets. Apart from learning aspect, children also get addicted to games, Facebook, and WhatsApp and get hooked to screen for a long time, the flaw of the technological boom. This has brought in brain drain. People started thinking anything coming from google or WhatsApp was correct. Many have stopped reading, leading to brain drain eventually. Ms. Nandita points out that we must nurture the right things in children and discusses ways to do it.

She feels that the current situations are against the norms held earlier. In a classroom environment, a teacher could interact with the child, but now the teacher is forced to go online. The children interact with the teacher via the screen which has become the medium now. While doing so, the children could mute audio or video, and the teachers have to instruct them to unmute themselves to continue the teaching.

These things are common when the child does not get interested in the class. In order to make the classes interesting and impressive to the children, the teachers should think of novel ideas such as a puppet that asks the children how they are, if they are enjoying class etc. The children mostly respond one by one, enjoy the class, and interact with the teachers. Questions are asked through these characters, and it becomes the teachers, and the teachers can explain the context. These are some methods innovated by them to make the class entertaining and happening.

It is a known fact that children have a short attention span. They want to

Microbiology and Masters in Business Management (HR) and a certified career counsellor from GCC. She is currently working in Bangalore in NP School and has worked in many schools all over the country. Her interest in teaching and being a passionate conversationalist made her do the IMTT course. She is in the teaching profession for the past 8 years. Excerpts of a recent conversation with our magazine.

keep moving by excusing themselves under some pretext. This cannot be stopped as it is an online class. The teachers have to stop the class and go ahead once the child returns. If the class is interesting and entertaining it can make the child sit hooked to it, and he will understand the concept better.

On why the online class must be different, Ms. Nandita says that in a classroom the teachers would be doing something to grab the attention of the children by asking them to look at the board and pay attention to what the teacher says. But in an online class, the child can conveniently mute and turn off the video, and the teacher has no control over it. To grab the children's attention, the teacher must always come up with interesting facts. All the concepts and ideas should be focused on how to hold the attention of the children. These problems are not found in an offline class. The children in an online class are remotely controlled, and the teachers have no control whatsoever as they are far away.

Since the attention span of the chil-

dren is short, they try to do something that interests them. It is the teacher's responsibility here to make the children attentive and understand the teacher is saying something particularly important. The teacher cannot scold the children in an online class, and they must be very courteous. At the same time the teachers have to make the students ensure that they are watching the teachers and following the teaching. Children are usually interested in pictures and focus on what the teacher shows on the screen. Teachers have to think of how to change the monotony of the class and make it fun-filled. The pre-primary class teachers have time limitations and cannot take more classes.

They have a short time to explain the concept and complete the annual work plan. Things have to be divided within the short time which is difficult. When the child is not interested in the class, the time is lost for them. To prevent all these problems, the teachers must make the class interesting and attention-grabbing for the students.

According to Ms. Nandita, the trick of the trade is to make the child sit in one place and get engrossed in the class. The teachers should understand that catching their attention is easy but to keep the interest alive is hard. To prevent such situations, the teachers should not copy from others. Original ideas and innovative ones should be implemented in the class.

Children follow or imitate what the elders do. If the teachers do not do things, they expect the children to do, nothing good can happen for the children and they will only imitate what the teachers or parents do. They must make changes to make the classes interesting and fun filled. The students will also realize that they will do something the teacher likes and be outstanding in the class. The responsibility of both parents and teachers is to make the children learn things what they could not do in the schools. Parents have done a commendable job this year, Ms. Nandita appreciates.

How online classes have affected the youngest one learning in the family saddens Ms. Nandita. In particular, the pre-primary students have very less time to interact with the teachers. The older children have been having their regular online classes.

CBSE has ensured intensive regular classes for all the children that includes scholastic and non-scholastic activities. Many parents feel that children of age group 5 to 8 are the worst affected when compared the ones in the age group of 9 to 13. Though they stay at home, they have lacked social interaction. When a 3-year-old goes to school, he not only learns to read and write but also social interaction with others, sharing, and how to behave with others. She feels these children has gone one year back as their social growth has stopped. It is not the case with the children alone but even with adults of all age groups. Though people are advanced technologically, they have gone behind by 10 years at least in their social behaviour. It may take a long time to compensate for what they have lost.

Ms. Nandita points out that when a survey was conducted to check how effective was e-learning, some people believed it was indeed affected. 43% said that not much had gone wrong, and 13% said that there was no impact at all. These people made a larger group. The survey does not say that e-learning was effective all the way,and not all the people said it was effective as the kids were at home and parents did most of the work and till the parents took the responsibility to do the work, the children could not do everything by themselves.

When asked if the old system of learning can be relevant now, Ms. Nandita points out that online learning is like distance learning, with no materials or tutor to interact with. Everything goes online, and there is no peer group to discuss things with. This is not considered the best source of learning as seen in current scenario when an MBA graduate who has studied offline is considered more credible than one who has done MBA through distance learning. So, when the children show their certificate anywhere, it would be felt that the 2 years of online learning would not have given the child the ultimate learning experience he was supposed to get.

Also, it requires a strong self-motivation and time management from the students. It is said that only 5% of the students in the whole system have shown self-motivation because their parents should have made them change their attitude over the years. Self-motivation in children is difficult, and they find managing classwork and homework at home quite tough. It is here that self-motivation comes to play a role.

Social isolation is yet another problem with online learning as a child has no interaction with the nearest human being, teachers, or peer group. They may interact virtually, but personal touch is lacking there that will affect the personal growth of the child.

Prevention of online cheating is also a tough task for the teachers. The children should have total dedication to clear the exam without cheating. With Google apps in place to search and get all the information needed, the children will tend to check these apps, get the answer, and score good marks. Given an option, the mind thinks of cheating. Great will power is needed for the students to realize that they are cheating themselves and not their parents or teachers. It is a brain drain. The online assessment has made the children feel they have not done the exam in the true sense.

Ms. Nandita talks about the lack of learning of life skills or interaction with peer group and teachers. They do not learn how to behave in a group of people or how to be enterprising. They do not learn to think out of the box if they do not brainstorm themselves and decide on their own by getting the different aspects of it. They do not learn the cultures of other people to move with them resulting in lack of communication too.

Ms. Nandita opines that online teaching is only a transition period. It cannot be followed in the future or whole life. Online classes can only assist the students if there are no offline means of education. If online classes are to be adapted, the students are going to lack proper help, assistance, support, tips, guidance, and advice from the teachers. Till the time they have human interaction, social skills to develop into a good human being they will find it difficult.

Listen to the full conversation at www.indiaschoolnews.com

Kunal Anand

My experience with blended and integrated learning methodology

Edited excerpts of a recent conversation with our magazine.

Dr. Kunal Anand is a passionate educator. Though he never wanted education to be his career, once he got into it, he become very much involved into it. He has been encouraging blended learning, also called as integrated learning for the present-day students. These two terms are often heard nowadays ever since the pandemic broke in and new education policy came in. These aspects were there even before, we were working on these terms, but no effort was made to understand what integrated learning could be. When the required ingredients are blended in the right proportion, integration happens, and you get a format that is good for you. Earlier schools used to make time a constant figure and learning a variable factor. Blended learning has made learning a constant factor and time a variable one.

Because of the pandemic, we have all shifted to online classroom. This is a blended kind of interaction with lots of things such as improvement in schools, education system, and classrooms. The last few months have given an opportunity for teachers to improve their understanding levels and come up with an absolutely a new form of education. We had never been able to make it practical in classroom. Technology had overpowered everything, but it was not used in the way it should have been because we had not blended what is required.

Pandemic outbreak has given us an opportunity to understand that there can be a life outside the traditional classroom where the teacher holds the book and delivers the lectures, and the students take notes and go back. We were doing this for many years. We ask the teachers to prepare PowerPoint presentations, videos, and integrations, and take classes on a laptop. They have to address to a machine, and it was not easy for the teachers. We have always been talking about blended learning and integrated learning through internet but suddenly now it has come up.

Dr. Kunal wonders if we are really prepared for it and how much are we ready for this type of integrated or blended model of learning. The new education policy talks high about it. In this academic year, integration of art is happening. The educational boards have to integrate art education into the mainstream education. People have suddenly started saying we will do it. But he wonders why were we not doing it before. The students were drawing diagrams, science models, role plays, and stage programs on subjects. This is nothing but art integration. CBSE asks us to upload the work and focus on integration. We have had all these in place and were doing it. But the fact is that we were not aware of how we were going to benefit out of it. When the integration comes in, challenge will be something else, like integrating social studies with science and music with art. This is integration and the way of learning. We can still do it. It is happening in our schools.

Dr Kunal says that his physics teacher used to integrate physics concepts with music so beautifully that students were able to follow it very well. Blending means a perfect balance of face to face and technology. If we do not have the right quantity of ingredients, it will not be possible to have a perfectly blended education. When 2020 and 21 started rolling in, the challenge was what to do, and the educators did not know how to take technology to classroom. This was because the educators were used to classroom, labs etc. They never thought of having an integrated classroom.

When Zoom or Gotomeeting was introduced, Dr Kunal says that he learnt it through meetings and passed on to his teachers. It is learning happening at every point of life, homes, and society. If somebody wants to look from the perspective of an educator and wants to go

Dr. Kunal Anand, Principal, Delhi Public School, Udhampur, J & K since the last 3 years, has 17 years of experience in teaching, administration, training and development and related activities at various schools.
He is also the proud recipient of award for 100 highly effective principals of India by AkS educational services, Principal of the year by Times Now and Franchise India. He was also awarded Bhartiya Shikha Salman Puraskar Presented by Dr Murli Manohar Joshi and International Education excellence award by Sunil Shastri.

a long way in education, he should be a constant learner. Thus, he can get ideas from everything around him which can be blended and used in classroom. Only thing a perfect blending of things should be there.

Dr. Kunal points out that the pandemic situation has not made blended learning fully effective because face to face interaction is through a via media only. Blended learning requires physical contact and perfect balance. Everybody come across self-guided lessons, rotation modules, online labs, which are fully online, and flexi models. But what should be done and where to start is the doubts lingering. When Dr. Kunal had to start online class, the teachers had to be taught to use Zoom. There were a number of meetings with teachers, parents, and students to understand what it is and how to use the same. Interactions are needed to put across the points clearly to the listeners that the teachers have. Then teaching lessons on Zoom, conducting activities and family quizzes in every class really worked for them. When the students and parents learned to use Zoom, the parents got connected with schoolteachers and institutions and they are fully aware that the school

is coming up with something new and different. It worked great for the school. Lots of activities are conducted involving parents. Dr. Kunal heaps praises on the parents as they came up exceptionally well, cooperative, and supportive to the school. The teachers never felt that school was not open. They got the feedback from all over the country, and it was a learning for parents. Such an integrated parents' participation is not possible in a regular school. Parents opened up telling the teachers their strong areas and even volunteered to take classes and did exceptionally well. Doctor parents were asked to have small talks with teachers and children as to what has to be done in the pandemic period.Dr. Kunal is happy that the school did what has to be done in such a situation. They started blending learning. It is just not possible to open the computer and do the presentation. He has done blended learning as he has learnt technology and face to face integration.

The second part to this is involvement. The teachers have to involve the students, parents, and stakeholders so that they get involved in what the school does making it easy to integrate things. Dr. Kunal recalls an event in May when every year they used to conduct a debate UNISON on various topics, and this year with the pandemic looming large, they were wondering how to integrate this with the routine because nobody is physically present. It was a 2-day fest which used to culminate with a big bang and party by the students. This year the school tried to do it online and renamed it eUNISON. The number of participants exceeded their target, and so at one point of time they had to stop registration as they could not give opportunity to everybody. The 2-day fest extended to 4 days. It was a marvellous outcome. The school faced the biggest hitch in availability of videographers and photographers in the science cateogory. But the students volunteered to do it themselves. After the fest was over, everyone was surprised at the way the students had created such a beautiful integration of videos and photos. The entire program was summarised in a 2-minute video. Such a blending has to be done in every aspect. The 2020-2021 batch has seen more activities than

the earlier years at the physical ground. The school has taken part in Fit India week celebrations which was for one week and included challenges such as running, cycling, and everything was done virtually. The participation was amazing with high numbers.

Dr. Kunal points out that blending is not restricted. The right blend and texture of ingredients go into picking up the best. The teachers have to start preparations well in advance. He has told his teachers to think for the classroom. If they start well ahead, they will come up with ideas of blending learning and integration which will benefit the students.

Peer learning and involvement are very good for them if they are into blended learning modules. It becomes easy for them to be flexible with time and approach when they get peer group recommendations and discussions. It becomes easy for the students to retain for a long time when everything is blended into integrated model. Apart from the traditional reading and learning, they can understand and retain for a long time. Retention is a factor students learn from integrated learning module.

Effectiveness and satisfaction quantum of learning at the end is not measurable. They come out with different ideas. They also improve their soft skills. In a physical class, teachers are not able to concentrate much on communication and soft skills. In an integrated module, in an online class, if a child is asked questions, he has to put the answer in a chat box, thereby improving his soft skills, discipline, and interaction. Soft skills development is seen in blended learning. Dr. Kunal says that if there is a perfect blending of ideas, integrate thoughts, innovations, and thoughts, it is good for the students.

The teachers play a very important role in blended and integrated learning methodology, and the school heads play an important role in motivating them. What is your advice to the school heads in this regard and what do you consider is the need of the hour to be effective?

I am sure all the heads of schools are doing their best and doing exceptionally great. Definitely teachers play an important role in this game of blended

integrated learning moving forward. They have to take everything to parents, students, and classrooms. I would advice my colleagues to be the front liner in this regard. If you are able to prepare one good example of integrated learning, prepare such a model first and share with the teacher to follow than asking them to do first. You have to lead in preparing the model. Pedagogy leaders is all about integrating lessons which you are preparing each and everything for the class.

The heads have to be the nucleus of the team and express themselves correctly, it becomes easy for the team to follow the instructions. It is essential that the heads integrate with their teams and be a role model up to some extent. I feel if the heads become the nucleus and start controlling things from the centre, it will be easy for the teachers. I prefer blossoming from the centre than sitting at the top and advising.

There is a digital divide in India. How can the schools adapt blended learning in semi urban areas where not many houses have appropriate gadgets and data connection?

We in J and K have the same problem and working with 2G network as it is a troubled state. My place is a small one, and so it was not easy for me too. There is a vision for digitalisation, but the students did not have gadgets. To add to the woes, J and K does not have much connectivity either. But the teachers did not restrict themselves to one media. They were ready to talk to students on mobiles or landlines.

They would send videos too. The teachers approached the local televisions and cable networks, requested them for a slot to talk to the students about the lessons which reached far off areas. It worked out as regional television and cable connectivity were there is almost all houses. The teachers had the perfect integration and understanding. Integration and blending are not only to put the ideas across but also to see that they are implemented. Going beyond the normal is something to make you feel you are doing things. Teachers also arranged to meet students in groups and clear their doubts in their lessons.

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TALIBAN
sweep through Afghanistan, imperiling girls school

"When I walk to school, I take every step with immense fear and worry — I'm not sure I will return home safely," said Principal Lailuma Khaliqyar.

With American forces nearing their withdrawal and the Taliban on the march across Afghanistan, Lailuma Khaliqyar worries that the thriving Um-Salma girls school, where she serves as principal, will be easy pickings for the advancing Islamic militants.

"They shouldn't abandon us at the moment that the Taliban is advancing," Khaliqyar, 43, said recently. "When I walk to school, I take every step with immense fear and worry — I'm not sure I will return home safely."

She fears it is only a matter of time until nearby Charikar, the provincial capital of Parwan province — a region known for its delicious grapes — falls to the Taliban. Once that happens, it will be the end for Um-Salma and the hopes and dreams of thousands of girls.

They will close my school," said Khaliqyar, whose three daughters attend the one-story building defended by a lone, unarmed guard.

That U.S. forces quietly vacated the

Bagram Airfield, once the epicenter of America's war against the hard-line Taliban movement and a 20-minute drive from Um-Salma school, on July 2 just underlined her fears. And then on Monday the commander of U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan stepped down, marking a symbolic end of the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan.

'She makes us proud'
When Khaliqyar took over the school in her native Parwan nearly 10 years ago, most of the male teachers were neglecting their jobs in favor of tending their farms, she and others interviewed by NBC News said. They did not like her efforts to raise the standards, and Khaliqyar had to beat back threats and pressure to step down.

But she triumphed, and went on to hire qualified teachers and establish extracurricular activities such as choir and volleyball at the school named after one of the Prophet Muhammad's wives.

Under Khaliqyar, enrollment has increased threefold to 1,600. Now, the majority of seniors attend university — 36 out of 43 in the most recent graduates have gone on to higher education.

Taliban fighters and villagers celebrate the peace deal signed between the U.S. and the Taliban in Laghman Province in March 2020.Wali Sabawoon / NurPhoto via Getty Images file

Her accomplishments have been noticed and, in 2019, the administration of President Ashraf Ghani named her one of the 100 best school principals in Afghanistan.

"There was nothing in the school before Khaliqar came as a school principal," said Zuhal Seerat, a student at the school. "She brought in library, laboratory, sport venues, and much more."

"She makes us proud — her perseverance makes her as a role model for me," the 12th grader said.

The education of women and girls has been a central plank of the multinational effort to rebuild Afghanistan since the Taliban were toppled in 2001 in the U.S.-led invasion — so much so that images of young groups of schoolgirls wearing white headscarves have become a visual shorthand for progress.

But after billions in aid and 20 years of a U.S.-backed government in Kabul, an

estimated 60 percent of the 3.7 million children who are not in school in Afghanistan are girls. Their low enrollment is explained in part by a lack of female teachers, particularly in rural areas, according to the U.N. children's agency.

Even these imperfect gains are now at risk.

'Properly veiled'

Um-Salma, its teachers and students would most likely fall foul of the Taliban, which sheltered 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden as he plotted the attacks and refused to hand him over.

While in power, the Taliban enforced a strict version of Islam that made women and girls practically invisible in public life. Girls were barred from attending school and women were not allowed to work outside the home or to appear in public without a male escort and an all-encompassing dress. Violators of these rules or edicts could be flogged in public or executed.

Now, as U.S. forces exit and the Taliban take control of territory at a pace that has even taken some militants by surprise, the group has made vague pledges to up-

h o l d women's rights under Islamic law. They say they support limited education of girls as long as it is according to their inter-

pretation of the Sharia, or Islamic law. But reports from captured territory indicate the group has not reformed its views much when it comes to women and girls.

And a Taliban commander in Ghazni province and another in Helmand province has told NBC News that women would not be able to work in politics or business under their rule. Both commanders, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reproters, said women would be able to teach "properly veiled" girls up to the age of 12 in religious schools. In addition, a medical track would be established so women could train as nurses and doctors, they said.

Sayed Yaha, who helped found Um-Salma and is its head teacher, says the group has detained him and killed 10 of his relatives — all young men in their 20s.

"I worry about the Taliban so much that I stay up late at night until 2 a.m. watching the news, hoping there will be good news of the defeat of the Taliban," Yaha, whose wife is a teacher, said.

He added, "I only receive bad news."

'Cut you into pieces'

While she fears the Taliban, Khaliqyar's first enemies after being appointed principal in 2012 came from within her own community, which is majority Tajik —an ethnicity that has long been at odds with the overwhelmingly Pashtun Taliban.

When she was appointed, men brandishing weapons and riding on motorcycles accosted her on the street, Khaliqyar says. Then came text messages and anonymous calls threatening to kill her.

"We want a male principal," she said one message read. "Do not resist, we

will cut you into pieces."

The threats against her are an indication that the Taliban are not the only Afghans to have deeply conservative views of women's place in society.

Khaliqyar says she reported incidents of intimidation and death threats to the police, the intelligence agency and local education officials. A spokesman for the police could not confirm that they had received the threats.

While these men tried to drive her out of her job, there were also men who supported her so she could remain principal.

Her husband, Qasim, a former soldier and bodyguard, took leave from his job in the capital to escort her back and forth to school during the early years.

Some in Afghanistan warn of event 'worse than 9/11' as Taliban make advances

Mohammad Sadiq Karimi was among a group of community elders who attended a meeting in a mosque and decided to override local opposition to her appointment.

"We knew Khaliqyar was committed to educating our girls," said Karimi, 57, whose daughter studies at Um-Salma. "We hope this school will change Parwan province. We did not have such a principal before."

Boosted by this vote of confidence, Khaliqyar said she was determined to persevere.
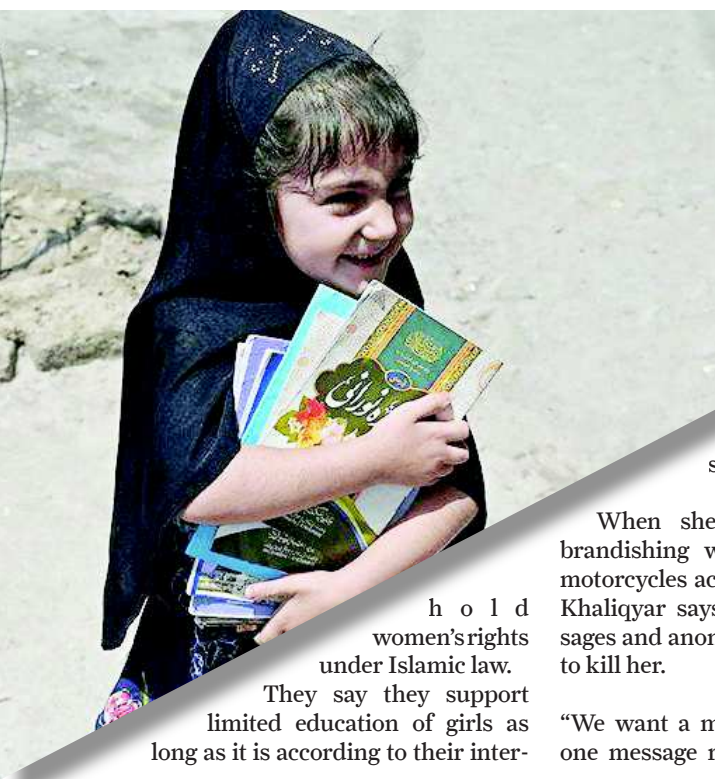
"I had to show people that I could run the school 100 times better than male teachers," she said.

Now, though, all these efforts could be in vain.

"Peace is such a sweet dream," she said. "But if the Taliban returns and brings their dark rule, there will not be peace — we do not want to be in darkness."

By Ezzatullah Mehrdad and Saphora Smith

Source: NBC News

Re-educated: How I Changed My Job, My Home, My Husband and My Hair by Lucy Kellaway

This former Financial Times columnist's account of why, aged 57, she began a new life as a teacher in an inner London comprehensive is brutally honest, fascinating and moving

I expected to like Re-educated, the new memoir by Lucy Kellaway, who at the age of 57 and to the bafflement of friends and colleagues, resigned from her cushy perch as a columnist for the Financial Times to retrain as a teacher. Reinvention stories are always fun and rarely feature anyone who can't be spun as still young, plus I like journalist narrators. The surprise of the book, then, isn't that it is good, but how good – and thrilling, and fascinating, and moving. To my amazement, I found myself swallowing hard halfway through the story and remained on the brink of tears for the entire final third.

Nothing dramatic happens, or rather, nothing dramatic beyond the dramas that attend most people's lives as they age. We meet Kellaway in 2013, in her early 50s, just as her marriage is deteriorating, her ageing father is fading, and after decades as a journalist at the FT, she is facing burnout and mid-career malaise. We learn that, in the 70s, her late mother was an inspirational English teacher in north London, and that she is obsessed with property. Somehow all these factors co-mingle in Kellaway's mind to inspire her to do something radical. Five years later, she has quit her job, ended her marriage and moved from the large, period property in Highbury where she and her husband raised their four children, to live alone in a modern house in Hackney. It is from here she begins a new life as a teacher.

As Kellaway herself points out, books about ageing tend to be terrible; either too maudlin, or too evasive and jolly. The joy of Re-educated is a briskness of tone that doesn't forestall introspection. In fact, I found the book a great deal more honest than a lot of ostensibly more literary memoirs. It is rare, in any story, to find a narrator who can confront her own limitations without sneakily presenting them as adorable virtues. Kellaway doesn't do this. She is, one senses, as appalled by herself as some of her new colleagues are by her during her first weeks on the job. When Kellaway starts teacher training, she is monstrously bigheaded, over-fond of her own opinion, sceptical of authority, hostile to being managed, and can't work any type of technology. In other words, a typical career journalist.

This is a book about having one's assumptions – about oneself, and others – thoroughly and swiftly dismantled. The school Kellaway joins is a large comprehensive in Hackney, where the majority of kids come from economically disadvantaged homes. It is a school where the emphasis is on discipline and rig-

orous exam-training, neither of which fits into Kellaway's ideas of what a good school should be. In the 70s, when she attended Camden School for Girls, the emphasis was on creativity. Slowly, Kellaway sees the limitations and class biases of this particular mindset.

"Progressives like my parents," she writes, "would have denied that education was about knowing things. They would have said it was more about skills, about learning how to think, and, most importantly, learning how to think originally. I would have accepted this myself until I started teaching."

After a few months in the job, with her inadequacies starkly on display ("'I'm not being funny, Miss. But I could learn this better from watching a video," offers one child, helpfully, after another disastrous lesson), she understands that ignoring the curriculum to model herself after Robin Williams in Dead Poets Society does the kids a disservice. "The best way of helping Alicia," she writes, in relation to a struggling pupil, "is not to try to make economics a fun show, it's to get her to pass her exam. If

it is a teacher's job to open doors, those doors, under the present regime, are GCSEs."

In those early days in the school, Kellaway is constantly being humbled by the extent of her ignorance

To underline this point, Kellaway writes about the experiences of her own son, Art, who attends a private school in London and gets poor grades in his A-levels. Everything turns out all right, partly because, after the shock of the failure, Art pulls himself together. But things also work out because his educated, wealthy, middle-class parents know how to work the system. (They discover you can get into Nottingham University to do engineering even with two Cs, if you do a foundation year first.) These contingencies aren't reachable for most of the kids Kellaway teaches; if they fail – thanks to her self-indulgent teaching, or for any other reason – the likelihood is they'll receive no second chance.

There's another narrative in the book, which follows Kellaway and her business partner, Katie Waldegrave, as they set up Now Teach, a non-profit designed to recruit teachers from middle-aged professionals who are fed up with their first careers. This is fascinating, too; the ranks of bankers and lawyers who secretly want to be maths teachers. Some drop out when they discover how hard it is to walk into a room where you're not automatically the boss. But many succeed, at a stage in life when it is assumed starting from scratch is impossible.

The point, writes Kellaway, is that "career" is the wrong word for people like her, who enter teaching after decades of success elsewhere. She has no ambition, other than to be a better teacher; when she's offered more money to do a job with a small managerial load, she turns

it down. This is a privilege, of course. Kellaway and the teachers recruited through Now Teach are financially secure. But it also frees them up to focus exclusively on the kids.

It is mind-bendingly hard. In those early days in the school, Kellaway is constantly being humbled by the extent of her ignorance. In a staff meeting, she bristles when a fellow teacher priggishly upbraids her for using the term "low ability" in relation to her bottom economics set. "'Can I suggest,' she said in a sugary voice with head held to one side, 'that you be careful about using the term 'low ability'?" The woman advises Kellaway that the correct term is "low prior attainment", to which Kellaway retorts, internally, "What total PC bollocks. Whose interests were served by this soppy pretence that everyone is equally able, when this was so evidently not the case?" But she changes her mind on this, too. "Even though 'low prior attainment' doesn't trip off the tongue, the more time I spend with teenagers the more I see the problem with attaching an ability label to them."

There are lots of reasons to read this book, which has the fineness of detail, sharpness of humour and grace of a novel by Penelope Lively. But it's this business of changing one's mind – the thing most of us least like to do – that I admired the most. That and the feel-good conclusion that it's possible to change course and be happy. "I'm exhausted, but not especially stressed," writes Kellaway after another tough day. "This is something odd about my new life: even though it is far more tiring than my old one, it doesn't stress me out in quite the same way. I think this is because it's not actually about me. It's about the students." Walking home from school, she goes over the events of the day. "I did some bad things and some good things. And that, it seems to me, is good enough."

Re-educated: How I Changed My Job, My Home, My Husband and My Hair by Lucy Kellaway is published by Ebury

Buy the book on Amazon
https://amzn.to/36cQqm5
By Emma Brockes
Source : Guardian

Computer Science for All?

Nicole Reitz-Larsen uses movement to teach computer science at West High School in Salt Lake City. She used to teach German and business.

Step into Nicole Reitz-Larsen's classroom in Salt Lake City's West High School and see students grooving to "Single Ladies" or zigzagging to execute one of LeBron James's handshakes. You might think it's a dance class. It's not.

Reitz-Larsen is teaching computer science through movement. The former German-language and business instructor found that linking difficult concepts such as algorithms and the binary system to students' interests helps the students grasp a topic that many were leery about before they stepped into her class.

"I'm always thinking about how to sell it to my students," said Reitz-Larsen, who learned how to teach the complex subject in three months after administrators asked her to pioneer it at West. "You have those kids who say, 'I'm never going to use this.'"

Young people who are glued to their phones and laptops for many of their waking hours are often apathetic when it comes to figuring out what makes their devices tick. About one of every three girls and half of boys think computer science is important for them to learn, according to a 2020 Google/Gallup, Inc., survey of 7,000 educators, parents, and students.

The finding came four years after President Barack Obama declared that computer science is as essential for K–12 students as reading, writing, and arithmetic. The announcement gave momentum to a computer-science-for-all movement and propelled industry-backed nonprofits such as code.org to the forefront of debates about what should be taught in schools. Joe Biden, both as vice president and during his 2020 presidential campaign, emphasized his support for having K–12 students learn the subject.

The effort is part of a broader attempt to overhaul and update the U.S. education system. Proponents argue that it's time to amend the public-school curriculum to reflect life skills demanded by the ever-changing Information Age. Such a reframing is necessary, they say, to ensure students can compete for positions focused on cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and mobile-app development.

After Obama's high-profile endorsement of code.org's mission, the organization joined educators and other advocates to help persuade state legislatures to allocate millions of dollars toward new laws that advance its vision that "every student in every school has the opportunity to learn computer science."

Some states made more progress than others. Thirty-seven adopted computer-science standards for K–12, and 20 required all high schools to offer the subject. In Nevada and South Carolina, the discipline is now a graduation requirement. New York City committed to making the subject available at every K–12 school by 2025. New rules such as these helped drive about 186,000 students to take Advanced Placement computer-science tests in 2020, nine times more than in 2010.

A 2020 report from code.org found that 47 percent of the nation's high schools teach computer science. Despite a growing belief among parents, administrators, and students in computer science's benefits, and millions of dollars allocated to offering it in K–12 schools, gaps in access and participation among Black, Hispanic, and white students persist.

Today, computer-science-for-all leaders acknowledge they've hit a plateau and that they need more-widespread buy-in from lawmakers and educators and increased funding to overcome disparities in the U.S. education system that fall along racial and socioeconomic lines.

"Early on, we got all these early-adopter states, school districts, and teachers raising their hands, and there was a frenzy of activity. Now we're moving into people being told to do it," said Ruthe Farmer, chief evangelist for CSforAll, a New York–based nonprofit. "The skepticism around how we're going to get this done is still there."

Constraining the movement's growth are a scarcity of well-qualified teachers, particularly in math and science, and competition for resources in cash-strapped school districts. Hard-fought progress was also stalled by the coronavirus pandemic, when states such as Colorado and Missouri reallocated or froze funding dedicated to broadening access to the subject in K–12.

At the same time, Covid-19 laid bare long-standing inequities in access to laptops and high-speed broadband connections necessary to expand availability across cultures and to English language learners, rural students, and those with disabilities.

Julie Flapan (left) and Jane Margolis caution against schools' adding computer-science class at the expense of other courses.

Julie Flapan (left) and Jane Margolis caution against schools' adding computer-science class at the expense of other courses.

As advocates remain focused on quantifying computer science's inroads into public schools, there is a dearth of research that evaluates the effectiveness of different instructional methods for developing such skills. Assessments with which to measure curriculum quality, reach, and relevance are also largely absent.

What's more, there is no consensus on a robust definition of computer science, with some principals assuming courses that teach office skills will suffice. Some advocates now say it's time to step back and reassess whether computer-science education really is "for all."

"We are going really, really fast in trying to get computer science into schools and there absolutely is an urgency," said Julie Flapan, director of the Computer Science Equity Project at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"We have to have conversations about what's good for computer science and what's good for kids. We wrestle with these tensions," added Flapan, who is also co-director of the CSforCA Coalition. "We need to be mindful about not creating unintended consequences."

The tradeoffs of adding the subject in K–12 schools are now becoming apparent. In California, computer-science enrollment growth came at the expense of social studies, English/language arts, foreign language, and arts courses, researchers found. The field's supporters stress the subject must be taught alongside, or integrated into, other core courses, rather than replacing them.

"I don't think math class or computer science should be an either-or situation," wrote Jane Margolis, a senior researcher at the University of California, Los Angeles, and author of Stuck in the Shallow End: Education, Race, and Computing, via email. "Students need math, and they need computer science in today's world."

Early on, states and schools were eager to adopt computer science, Ruthe Farmer says, but now there is "skepticism."

Early on, states and schools were eager to adopt computer science, Ruthe Farmer says, but now there is "skepticism."

Or Do They?

Some scholars, though, reject the notion that all K–12 students should learn computer science, comparing the movement to other industry-driven efforts to add vocational training to public schools that led to agriculture, shop, and home-economics classes.

"Why would you teach coding to little kids, or even big kids, unless they want to be programmers?" said Larry Cuban, a professor emeritus of education at Stanford University.

"Because schools are politically vulnerable, this current push for coding for all, for computer science for all, is part of a historical trend to alter schools' curriculum to meet the needs of a vested interest," added Cuban, author of The Flight of a Butterfly or the Path of a Bullet? Using Technology to Transform Teaching and Learning.

The debate over the merits of computer science for all in K–12 schools is also occurring globally, said Andreas Schleicher, director for education and skills at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. He said teaching coding is not useful for K–12 students because coding languages change often.

"There is a debate about this that is similar to the one in the U.S.—you have here in Europe a technology industry that is very much pushing for these skills," said Schleicher, "and educators are pushing back and saying they don't want to teach for today's workplaces; they want to teach for tomorrow's workplaces."

Schleicher said he does believe that students should learn how to think computationally, particularly as that kind of thinking applies to data science and artificial intelligence. But, he said, using computers just to teach with the tool of the day, like a pen in the 17th century, or a typewriter in the 1900s, is a "time-bound phenomenon" with little relevance for students' futures.

These arguments point up a fundamental challenge for proponents of the computer-science-for-all movement: defining what the subject is and how it should be taught.

What Is Computer Science?

There is consensus on what computer science is not—basic computing skills such as Internet searching, keyboarding, and using a spreadsheet—but no universal agreement on what it actually is. There are many different definitions, largely because decisions about what and how students are taught are made at the state, district, and school level. New York emphasizes digital literacy; Texas incorporated the discipline into its technical career standards.

Many proponents of the computer-science-for-all movement, which began in the early 2000s, spend considerable time trying to dispel the notion that it's solely about learning coding.

Coding languages used in developing software are a tool for computer science, educators say, just as arithmetic is a tool for math and words are a tool for verbal communication. At its core, computer science is about learning how to create new technologies, rather than simply using them, advocates stress. It strives, for example, to teach students how to design the software that will make the spreadsheet.

Just as important as coding, backers add, are foundational concepts such as computational thinking. This approach to computer science provides students with a way to solve problems by breaking them down into parts, and it can be integrated across subjects as early as kindergarten.

Read full article at https://bit.ly/3C3xjJH
Source : www.educationnext.org

Move to Trash

A crisis like a pandemic can spark unpredictable changes in trends and behavior, like widespread mask wearing in the United States. But it also can accelerate changes that were already underway but otherwise would have taken root much more slowly. For example, working remotely was a relative rarity in early 2020; now many organizations may never again expect all employees in the office five days a week. And outdoor eating spaces, an occasional curiosity in some cities, have popped up nearly everywhere. Lots of cities and small towns have made it clear that they would like to keep this innovation even after the crisis recedes.

So too in the world of K–12 education, where some new pandemic-era

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practices are likely to persist for the long term. Some of these are simple and straightforward. Using Zoom for parent-teacher conferences and PTA meetings makes life easier for working parents. Online cur-

riculum materials rather than printed textbooks may also have staying power, since so many students have Chromebooks or other internet-connected devices. Others are more complicated, such as recording a school's or district's best teacher giving key lessons and us-

Five pandemic-era education practices that deserve to be dumped in the dustbin

ing those videos in multiple classrooms. That frees up other teachers to provide support and individualized instruction—a nimble, but politically sensitive, way to rework teachers' roles and use technology to improve instruction (see "How Big Charter Networks Made the Switch to Remote Learning," feature, Spring 2021).

But as both common sense and classic conservatism would submit, not all of the changes that have occurred in education during the pandemic are positive. And just as there are some innovations that we should strive to maintain in the post-Covid era, there are others we should leave behind.

Here are my top five—including several that are close cousins (perhaps evil cousins?) of more promising ideas.

1. Roomies and Zoomies Simultaneously

First, and perhaps most obviously, we should never again ask teachers to instruct half of their students in person and the other half remotely at the same time. Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, called it "not humanly possible"—and she's right.

This hugely unpopular "concurrent" model is surely the worst of both worlds, just like a videoconference with half the participants in person

and half logging in from afar is particularly unworkable. We know that, done right, remote instruction can work well for some teachers and students. But not when teachers are also trying to engage students in person at the same time. There's little doubt that this approach has created an enormous amount of stress for teachers and a subpar learning experience for kids.

Careful readers might wonder how I can square this with my previous advocacy for keeping teachers' cameras turned on once everybody returns to the classroom (see "A Post-Covid Case for Classroom Cameras," Spring 2021). And that's a fair question. As I (and others) see it, it's much more manageable for teachers working in a live classroom to have a handful of students following along at home, or even watching later via a recorded lesson, than try to engage what the Center for Teaching Quality calls "Zoomies and Roomies" in real time. If kids are home sick or down the hall because of in-school suspension, administrators can make it clear that teachers are not expected to call on them or otherwise engage them. But allowing absent students to watch what's happening in class is better than nothing at all.

There may be some enduring need for remote learning in the months and years ahead, especially for medically fragile students. In addition, as New York City has decided, districts may do away with "snow days" and keep school vir-

tually open when buildings are closed due to snow. Districts should offer robust online-learning options to families that want it—either by partnering with companies who specialize in this or by standing up their own programs. But this should be separate from in-person instruction.

2. Waiving Seat-Time Requirements

We need to make similar distinctions with the second item on my list: the cancellation of so-called "seat-time" requirements, which award course credit based on a minimum amount of instructional time. Given the need for social distancing, and the public-health priority of keeping adults and kids safe, many states understandably waived requirements that schools hold session for a certain number of hours or days in 2020 and 2021, while allowing students to progress through their classes. Likewise, states temporarily let go of many or all mandates dictating the number of hours allocated to particular subjects.

Education reformers who have been advocating for mastery- or competency-based learning were excited about that development, as moving away from seat-time rules was something they have advocated for years. But during the pandemic, many states simply got rid of seat-time requirements without substituting anything else in return. They did not ask schools to make sure that their students demonstrated competency in critical subject areas, as adopting mastery-based learning standards would require. Nor did they make sure the kids were getting the comprehensive educational experience that states are morally and legally obligated to provide.

By all means, let us continue to experiment with ways to move towards competency-based programs, especially for older students. But while we work towards that vision, we need to put those seat-time requirements back in place.

3. "Asynchronous" Days

The reason is related to my third item on the list of "innovations" that should go away: so-called "asynchronous" learning days, which are school days without live, or "synchronous," instruction. In Montgomery County, Maryland, where my two sons attend traditional public schools, every Wednesday is asynchronous. The idea, as far as I can figure it out, is that custodians would spend Wednesdays doing deep cleaning (which is now understood to be "hygiene theater"), while teachers would provide individualized instruction to the kids who need it most. Meanwhile, the majority of students would do independent work at home.

I don't think I am ratting out my sons by reporting, though, that very little independent work was happening on Wednesdays, beyond some regular homework that would and should be expected any day of the week. Without a clear

plan, "asynchronous" days are just extra time off.

I am broadly in favor of allowing schools to experiment with new schedules. For example, "half-time high school" could include having kids learn from home several days a week, or several hours a day, or even shift to a college-like schedule, with more time for independent work. But that's not what happened during the pandemic. In that case, some school districts simply gave up on providing a five-day-a-week educational experience to their students and expecting students to put in effort every day, as well. A recent study found that, even before the pandemic, districts and schools that downshifted to a four-day school week rarely offered meaningful learning opportunities for students on the fifth, out-of-school-day, and student test scores in math and reading declined (see "The Shrinking School Week," research, Spring 2021). There is no reason to keep asynchronous learning days once the pandemic is over.

4. Grade Inflation

The fourth big change that isn't worth celebrating is the rampant rise in grade inflation. When the school shutdowns struck in the spring of 2020, many districts decided that it would be unfair to apply normal grading policies for the fourth quarter, given the unevenness of access to remote learning. Some simply assigned students the grades they had already earned by mid-March or, like my home district of Montgomery County, rounded up their mid-March scores to the next highest letter grade. Others shifted to pass-fail systems.

Those policies could be defended during an emergency, but the downside is obvious. It sends a clear message that kids will not be held accountable for paying attention, doing their homework, and learning new material. Until we reach the day when intrinsic motivation is enough to get most kids and teenagers to prioritize their schoolwork (in other words, never), or when we've transitioned to a system focused on mastery, we're going to need grades to get kids to put in the necessary effort (see "The Case for Holding Students Accountable," feature, Spring 2018).

5. Diploma Devaluation

Finally, let us never again decide to graduate tens of thousands of students from high school regardless of whether they mastered learning expectations or not. A cynic might say that high schools and school systems have been doing that for years, and in some parts of the country, that is probably true. But before the pandemic, in about 20 states, students were expected to pass some sort of exit exam or end-of-course exam to graduate (though that number has been trending down). And in the others, students had to pass a certain number of courses in order to earn that diploma.

Read full article at https://bit.ly/3fgITYj
Source : www.educationnext.org

Remote learning best practices

"Remote learning" as a response to the coronavirus pandemic did not, for the most part, go well. Dozens of surveys and several analyses of school and district websites show that it took the majority of schools multiple weeks to stand up any type of online instruction. Challenges abounded even once they did. Millions of families didn't have high-speed Internet access or devices suitable for learning. Teachers were unfamiliar with online learning platforms and on average provided instruction just two hours a day. Many students were simply lost, not logging in and unreachable by educators. Parents reported that their children learned less than normal during the crisis.

Some schools, however, did much better.

That is one clear conclusion from an analysis I just completed for the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, examining the response of leading charter-school networks to the pandemic, based on interviews with network executives, principals, teachers, and parents as well as broader research. These networks shifted nimbly and effectively to remote learning. All were up and running with online instruction within days of the mid-March shutdowns; together, they distributed tens of thousands of devices and Internet hotspots; they offered a robust mix of live and recorded instruction which led to high levels of student engagement; and their teachers and leaders, though exhausted, embraced the chance to innovate like they hadn't in years. It wasn't perfect—even these exceptional organizations struggled with parts of the challenge—but there's much to applaud in what they did.

Now that it is clear remote learning will continue well into the 2020-21 school year in much of the country, what lessons might other schools take from the large charter networks? What did they actually do that allowed them to maintain quality teaching and learning? In some respects, they were the same things that many other schools in the district, charter, and private school sectors did in the response to the crisis, such as swiftly getting technology into students' hands, and feeding families on a regular basis.

But three actions these networks took that were critical to their success appear far less common in most other schools around the country. They:

Reached out to individual students and families on a regular basis.

Re-created the structure of the regular school day.

Used a team approach to teaching and instruction, centered around a common curriculum.

Reach out to individual students and families on a regular basis

A strong finding from the interviews was the central importance of regularly reaching out to students and families, including providing social and emotional support. This came up in nearly every interview. Most networks had an advisor or counselor system operating before and during the pandemic. Those systems enabled the schools to check in on student and family needs, provide emotional support, and gather feedback on how remote learning was going among their pupils. The networks reached out thoughtfully and systematically to individual students and parents—and persevered until nearly all were in regular touch.

Success Academy teachers contacted every student twice daily. The focus was on having conversations about reading and math: discussing what students were reading and talking through their approaches to math—are they imagining the problem accurately, and how did they select a strategy and why. Director of Literacy and History at Success Academy, Jessica Sie, told 50Can.org's Marc Porter Magee:

...for our youngest learners, so much of what we do is in-person and thinking about the read-alouds and the science and the reading instruction in small groups... you could just picture walking into a first-grade classroom, right? You have a group of kids on the floor reading. You have some students on a mat, and they're working together. And so taking that into a digital environment was definitely a challenge. The way that we approached it was to give really clear guidance. We sent parents frequent communication with daily updates about the simple clear learning plans for their kids.... For us, that meant: what are you reading each day, reading the books at home or using great online platforms like Tumblebooks and EPIC; doing some writing about the book you've read. So really simple... doing some science instructions....And then for math, what are a few problems that are aligned with the unit? And then we just checked in with parents through phone calls.

Time	Activity
8:00-9:00 a.m.	**Math** • 8:00-8:20 – Students watch live or recorded instructional videos • 8:20-9:00 – Students work on the classroom handout; math office hours (teachers on Zoom)
9:00-10:00 a.m.	**English** • 9:00-9:20 – Students watch live or recorded instructional videos • 9:20-10:00 – Students work on the classroom handout; English office hours (teachers on Zoom)
10:00-11:00 a.m.	**Science** • 10:00-10:20 – Students watch live or recorded instructional videos • 10:20-11:00 – Students work on the classroom handout; science office hours (teachers on Zoom)
11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	**History** • 11:00-11:20 – Students watch live or recorded instructional videos • 11:20-12:00 – Students work on the classroom handout; history office hours (teachers on Zoom)
12:00-12:30 p.m.	Break
12:30-2:00 p.m.	Electives (students can take multiple courses during this time) • Schools determine their own specific schedule; during this time • Note: just Monday to Thursday (Fridays are half-day)
2:00 p.m.	All classwork due if not submitted during class (b count as attendance and for credit)
2:30-4:00 p.m.	Targeted tutoring: (just Monday to Thursday; Fridays are half-day) • Teachers reach out to provide individual or small-group support (teacher-driven) • Other content (small-group instruction and counseling, for example) may take place during this time

Read full article at https: //bit.ly/2WEVpdv
Source : www.educationnext.org

Why do you want kids to code?

Wrong answers	Right answers
Use variables	Explore ideas
Write loops	Collaborate with others
Use if... then... statements	Make thinking concrete
Debug an error	Visualize a process
Use Boolean logic	Learn how to design
Learn hexadecimal	Solve a problem
Learn syntax	Create something exciting
Use technology	Control technology

Coding is a tool, not a learning outcome.

Created by @cashjim

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September 2020

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MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
	1 11:30 am Talk with Rajesh Yellayi, IBDP, A level, CBSE Chemistry and Physics Teacher,Kennedy High The Global School Hyderabad	2	3	4	5	6
7 10:00 am Talk with Akash Raut, Principal at DSB International School - Deutsche Schule Bombay, Mumbai	8	9	10	11 10:00 am Talk with Gaurav Singh, Co-Founder, Slam Out Loud	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21 11:30 am Talk with Tarun Seth, HOD Mathematics, IB DP Math Educator & AP Calculus teacher at Woodstock International School (The Fulbright Teacher Scholar)	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				