

NEP SCHOOLS: THE FUTURE

Relevant for: Polity | Topic: Education and related issues

A file photo of students attending online class in Bengaluru.

The [COVID-19 pandemic](#) has been the greatest disruptor in the education sector. It has brought the future to us sooner than we ever imagined. Had there been no pandemic, the [use of digital technologies in education](#) would not have been so rampant. Many of our teachers would have superannuated without ever learning to browse on devices. Learners would not have been exposed to a huge variety of innovative content or digital formats of education in their own languages. The engagement of parents and communities in their child's education would have been a distant dream. The essential role of schools and teachers in caretaking and the mental/physical/cognitive development of a child would not have been so permanently established. The need for foundational literacy and preventing dropouts would not have been so intensely realised. And the need to overcome the digital divide would not have been felt so acutely.

The schools of the future and the future of schooling are now both subject to intense debate, especially with the coming in of the [National Education Policy 2020](#). But certain broad understandings have emerged that most agree upon. Firstly, there is already a discernible shift in the focus from physical infrastructure towards digital and virtual requirements. Secondly, it is not edtech as much as it is the traditional face-to-face modes of learning in schools that will continue to be the greatest equaliser in education. Thirdly, skill-building for the requirements of the 21st century has assumed great significance. Fourth, accelerated and even differentiated instructional interventions will be required to overcome and reverse the impact of the pandemic. Lastly, it is likely that there will be more pressure on the government schooling system to expand its intake.

The blank pages in India's online learning experience

In this scenario, for schools to emerge as strong, inclusive and professional educational systems, it is essential to imagine what the schools of the future will be like. We believe that the following four qualities will define the schools of the future, both public and private.

Firstly, schools will encourage extended networks rather than remain as closed classroom communities. A wise person said, "In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson." Over the last couple of centuries, our education systems have shifted towards methods that may help individuals acquire knowledge, but may not equip them with life skills. As a result, we hardly have job creators passing out of the school precincts. We have many day-to-day problems, but very few problem-solvers. Future schools will go beyond the school walls. They will take teaching-learning to informal settings such as topic circles and eco clubs, visits to the neighbourhood, to museums or scientific laboratories, etc. Learners will be green in their approach, tech-savvy, connected to their roots and to the world, and will be able to effectively link their curriculum to their lives.

Secondly, schools will be pro-active innovators. They will adopt innovative pedagogies and differentiated instructions as per the needs of the learners to enable them to become knowledge creators and, eventually, job creators. They will utilise innovative methods of assessment to bring out the unique potential of every child, harness innovative technologies for teaching, learning and administration, and usher in a general culture of innovation and entrepreneurship as an integral aspect of the curricular transaction.

E-learning in India, a case of bad education

Thirdly, the future of jobs also has a direct bearing on the schools of the future. Routine jobs will become scarce. Students of the future will have to struggle with the new set of capabilities needed, hyper-information digressing into disinformation, virtual teams not seeing each other physically, and will constantly experience a swing between super speciality and cross-disciplinary skills. Curiosity and lifelong learning will become imperatives. Future schools will be future-oriented and connected to the job market, capable of empowering, and building the skills of learners for jobs that are yet to be created and technologies that are yet to be invented.

Lastly, schools will forge stronger and more trusting engagement with families and communities. The online world of e-parents-teachers meetings (e-PTMs), e-guidance to parents, and social media-based active communication with parents during the pandemic has opened up an entire world of possibilities. Parents, siblings, grandparents and other family members will turn out to be the most powerful ally and support in the effective delivery of education at all levels during the pandemic. This aspect will become robust and institutionalised. Local self-governments, health workers, environmentalists, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the community at large will be actively engaged in future schools in offering services, support, infrastructure, internships, exposure to future jobs, and learning from beyond the school boundaries, to create a vibrant school ecosystem.

Many parents take children out of private schools

The future depends on the decisions we make in the present, and lest we forget, the future of the country is enrolled in our schools today. Future schools will build the character of the children and set them free to discover the world, shape it and contribute to make it just and equitable.

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To reassure Indian Muslims, the PM needs to state that the govt. will not conduct an exercise like NRC

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