A Radical Perspective: New Education Pedagogy & Career Trends in the Post Covid World

Col Gaurav Bhatia, PhD (Retd)[1], Arundhati Bhatia[2], Dr. Anjali Thakur[3]

[1]Chandigarh University, Uttar Pradesh.
[2]Scholar, Masters Scholar, University of Texas, Dallas, USA.
[3]National Health Authority.

INTRODUCTION

Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will spend its whole life believing that it is stupid."

– Albert Einstein

The above quote by one of the greatest thinkers of our times sets the stage for my thoughts that I wish to share with my esteemed readers today. The belief that our education system suffers from certain endemic imperfections is hard to ignore. On deeper introspection about where we stand today concerning the education policy in vogue vs what is desirable, brings us to the confounding conclusion that the *"status quoist"* attitude that has been practised by us in the education sector over the past two centuries has probably outlived its utility and it is about time to bring about some radical changes to a system which is beginning to show signs of excessive wear and tear in the current COVID infested world.

Going by the adage enunciated a long time ago by Heraclitus that, *"The only constant in life is change"* it would come as a rather rude shock to the erudite Educators amongst us to realise that the primary and secondary school curriculum in vogue, in the Indian subcontinent, has not changed much in its format, pedagogy and content. It has for the most part remained the same from the days of the industrial revolution! Thus, despite the plethora of sterling institutes (the IIM's & the IIT's) of higher education in India – the primary and secondary education suffers from a mindset that can only be termed as medieval.

THE PROMINENT PAIN POINTS

Hindsight is notably cleverer than foresight.

-- Chester W. Nimitz

We cannot for certain know the compulsions, which forced our predecessors to adapt the archaic and seemingly obtuse educational pedagogies, which we have been following for the past many years. But now with the benefit of hindsight *(which is always twenty-twenty),*I tend to agree to what Edwin S. Shneidman states – *"Hindsight is not only clearer than perception-in-the-moment but also unfair to those who lived through the moment."*

Just as the *Gutenberg's Printing Press* impacted learning and education in the medieval times, in today's era it is the remarkable advances in the *Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)* which we need to openly embrace and harness for implementation in all walks of life – especially the educational sector.

It is evident that the current crisis has brought matters to a head and thankfully reoriented our focus on the revamping of the policies and pedagogies that are currently governing the educational sector. So, today instead of lamenting unremittingly about the time lost, opportunities missed and ruing about what we *did not, could not or have not been doing*; would it not be eminently better to utilise the opportunity provided to us by this *COVID upheaval* and dive headlong into improving the situation for all the stakeholders in the educational ecosystem viz – Students, Parents, Faculty and Administrators etc

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE TO LEARNING PEDAGOGY: THE ONLINE TRANSFERENCE

The COVID pandemic, coupled with the government imposed repeated Lockdowns, the non-negotiable requirement of social distancing and the fear psychosis playing on the minds of the entire educational ecosystem stakeholders has forced the educational institutes to migrate (willingly / forcibly) to an online mode of content delivery. Notwithstanding the oft-repeated shortcomings of untrained (semi-trained) faculty;choice of a suitable platform for online content delivery; crippling lack of ICT infrastructure/tools / appropriate devices – laptops, mobiles, iPads / bandwidth – to include cost factor of data/electricity supply;absence of

social interaction/communication amongst the teachers and students as also internally amongst the student fraternity; availability of study material; availability of an appropriate learning environment at home; methodology of assessment etc – for better or for worse, the inevitable shift to acceptance of online training by the entire environment has happened. Probably more as a *"fait accompli"* rather than a planned and desirable transition.

The Schools need to expeditiously take the *"bull by the horns"* and endeavour to address each one of these pain points by rising to the occasion and finding innovative solutions which can utilise the best practices of *"blended learning"* without falling prey to the *"Instant Solutionism"*

being offered by the dime-a-dozen ICT and digital learning experts. A suitable vehicle for this change is provided by the *"Flip Teaching"* concept propounded by Mrs Aradhana Rana, the Founder Principal of Icon Public School, Ahmadnagar (https://youtu.be/gAOeHDnIkew).

THE SIX PRINCIPLES

The TESOL (**T**eaching **E**nglish to **S**peakers of **O**ther **L**anguages) International Convention proceedings (https://www.tesol.org) articulate the *Six Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners.* Despite being formulated specifically for the teaching of English language, I find that these six principles find equal applicability as a basic methodology to guiding teachers of all subjects.
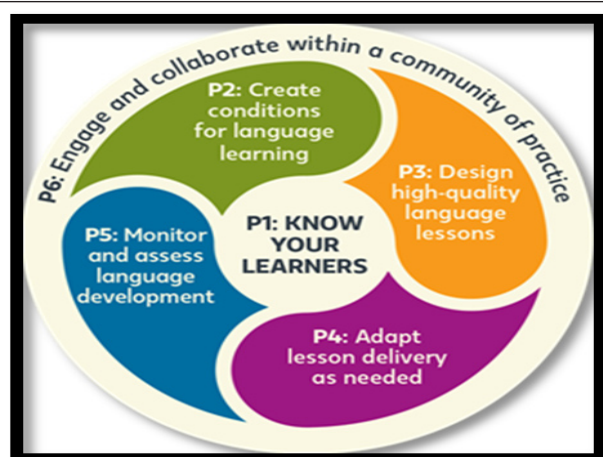
o **Principle 1.** Know Your Learners

o **Principle 2**. Create Conditions for (Language) Learning

o **Principle 3.** Design High-Quality Lessons for (Language) Development

o **Principle 4**. Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed

o **Principle 5.** Monitor and Assess Student (Language) Development

o **Principle 6**. Engage and Collaborate within a Community of Practice

ONLINE LEARNERS: THE WAY FORWARD

. . . a disruptive and extraordinary event that is, at least to some degree, caused by factors outside the focal individual's control and that triggers a deliberate thought process concerning one's career. The occurrence of a career shock can vary in terms of predictability and can be either positively or negatively valenced

- Akkermans, Seibert, and Mol

FUTURE "CAREER SHOCK"

The concept of "Career Shock" was discussed by Lee and Mitchell in 1994 and a suitable definition propounded by Akkermans et al in 2018 is quoted above. The COVID pandemic has unfortunately forced us into this situation as the students and online learners are compelled to "negotiate unpredictable events in a rapidly changing career environment". The key elements in this definition are *"frequency, intensity, controllability and predictability, valence, and duration".*

The educational session 2020 – 21 will remain etched in the memories of students, parents, teachers and administrators alike for the surfeit of changes which the academic environment was forced to adapt. The social media is replete with many memes and spoofs about the inherent failings of the online education methodology that has been adopted and adapted (possibly under duress) by the education ecosystem in the country.

The major issues which plague the environment today due to the situation perpetrated by COVID include issues related to the blurring of work-nonwork boundaries; impact on the currency of skills; increased use of technology; intensification of work, how it gets completed, when it gets completed; job insecurity; precarious work conditions for the health workers; work-life conflicts etc.

But then wishing these changes away is not something that one can visualise anytime soon. We need to reimagine and reorient our expectations and view the future with a changed perception. This includes the pressing necessity of training the student fraternity with new skillsets and fresh knowledge bases to be able to fill the shoes of a plethora of new and hitherto unheard-of career choices. It would be prudent to expect that both *"individual and contextual factors"* will influence people and their occupations in the future.
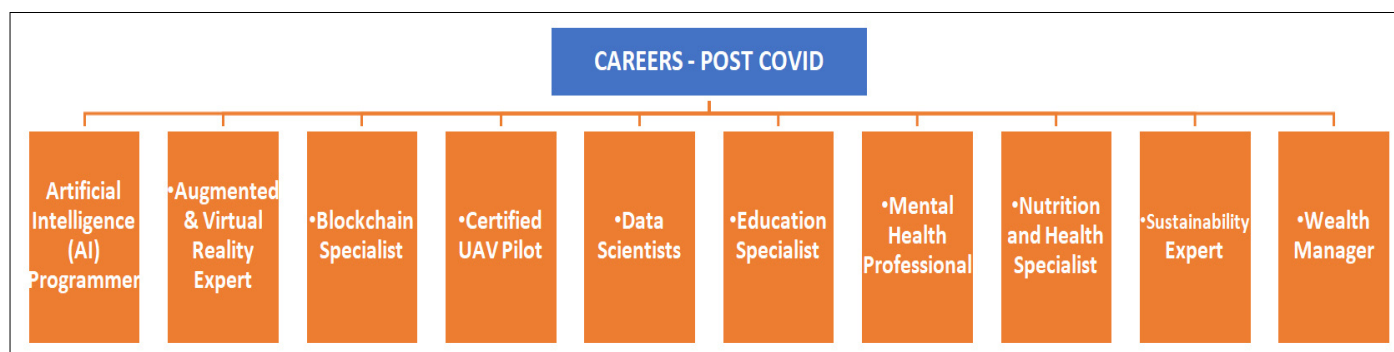
NEW CAREERS – AN OVERVIEW

The World Economic Forum: Human Capital Outlook - Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Report of 2016 states that nearly 65% students will eventually step into entirely new job types - which do not even exist presently. This *"crystal ball gazing"* is not a pipe dream but is borne out of the undeniable fact that a large variety of career paths and vocations which are commonplace today, did not exist in the last decade. This frenetic shift is only going to increase in magnitude and amplitude due to the innumerable

and precipitous advances in the fields of advanced materials, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, driverless transport, genomics and robotics.

It is reasonable to assume that many from amongst the current student fraternity, might be faced with the herculean challenge of stepping into these new career paths. A sampling of the probable vocations which might be commonplace over the next few years is presented in the graphic below.

CAREERS - POST COVID

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) Programmer
- Augmented & Virtual Reality Expert
- Blockchain Specialist
- Certified UAV Pilot
- Data Scientists
- Education Specialist
- Mental Health Professional
- Nutrition and Health Specialist
- Sustainability Expert
- Wealth Manager

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The tectonic shifts which have plagued the education ecosystem over the past nine months can only be compared to the gestation period of a human being in his mother's womb, wherein a tiny two cell entity blossoms into a fully developed infant. The consequences of the rapid changes to the process of learning *from in-person to virtual /online* coupled with the associated pros and cons remain largely rhetorical and the results will only be clear to us sometime in the future. Whether this unanticipated and bewildering surfeit of changes will prove to be a bane or a boon for the students, parents, teachers and administrators – is a discussion which will permeate the academic circles for many years to come.

It is self-evident to any discerning observer that there are way too many variables in a state of constant flux, to comprehend and arrive at any definitive answer to the riddles posed by these unprecedented times. Historically, the five different classifications of the Information Technology eras could be enumerated as - Stone Age - Iron Age - The Middle Ages - The Industrial Age and the Electronic Age. All these eras have seen a constant change in the types of jobs which have been prevalent in each age and became progressively obsolete or replaced by the requirements posed by the needs of the newer era.

By all indications available to us today the next era will be the *"Age of Reckoning"* a term coined by Brian Bi a Software programmer with Google. He maintains that the problems of this century will be unprecedented both in magnitude and amplitude, requiring some rather unique and hitherto unheard-of solutions being generated by the thinkers of the world. We as Educators – responsible to mould the minds of the future workforce have our task cut out for us. We need to girdle up to the challenge of playing the main protagonist's role to help the student fraternity battle these insurmountable odds, assist in supporting, shoring up their individual and collective resilience, manage their future career shocks, replenish and sustain their rapidly reducing attention spans with meagre resources, and eventually promote a sustainable career culture.

How we as a collective entity rise to simultaneously ameliorate the global sense of uncertainty as also face this unsurmountable challenge - is what holds the key to the *"Age of Reckoning"* and build a world that's truly better for all of us.

REFERENCES

1. Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. Educational Researcher, 18(1), 32-42. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X018001032

2. Castells, M. (2010). The rise of the network society (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

3. Fullan, M., & Langworthy, M. (2014). A Rich Seam: How new pedagogies find deep learning. Pearson.

4. Luckin, R., Holmes, W., Griffiths, M., & Forcier, L.B. (2016). Intelligence unleashed: An argument for AI in education. Pearson.

5. OECD. (2020). Education responses to COVID-19: Embracing digital learning and online collaboration. OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19).

6. World Economic Forum. (2016). The future of jobs: Employment, skills, and workforce strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. World Economic Forum.

7. Zhao, Y. (2020). COVID-19 as a catalyst for educational change. Journal of Educational Change, 21, 347–356. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-020-09340-5