

Soft skills are must

Education needs to be holistic; this will help children not only gather information but also do something useful with that, says Lina Ashar



The education system in India has had a very linear approach to learning and a straitjacketed approach to assessing what students have learned. The existing learning paradigm pits the children against each other and focuses on examination systems that determine their ability depending on grades scored by memorising the study material that they are being provided with.

Students today face the biggest contradiction of all times. They are expected to remember huge amounts of information to score on tests, knowing that retaining information is no longer a need in the real world. The knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for success today are different from what was previously required. Practice of evaluating children based on their memory and grasping level of the curriculum needs to be disrupted.

Human beings are evolving and so is society and industry. Perception and assessment of learning is changing in order to enable children to be future ready. In an era where 47 per cent of existing employment is being taken over by automation, the future belongs to the innovator. Skills such as imagination, entrepreneurship, storytelling, connecting, creativity and others, that will be highly valued in the future needs to be the focus of educators.

Education needs to have a holistic approach; this will help children not only gather information but also do something useful with that information by synthesising and creating something from that information base. Students need to learn necessary life skills, develop critical, constructive thinking and problem solving skills. There is a need to switch from a bonded curriculum-based teaching system to a model that will include the development of every child's social, mental and physical well-being.

A study conducted by Harvard University's The Carnegie Foundation and Stanford Research Centre says that in this new world, a whopping 85 per cent of one's success is attributed to soft skills. Yet most schools don't spend any time developing these soft skills.

Most schools drive out play and creativity in the process of schooling that does not centre around concepts that keep children engaged or the questions that they have. What they don't realise is that the brain is best engaged when it seeks out meaning in an area of interest or looks to fill an 'information gap'. The next best way is to create engagement of the brain by giving the brain a reason to learn something — a 'why this' is important to know, learn and use.

Education is not about burying children underneath volumes of incomprehensible formulae or facts. It is about creating enabling environments, ones that cater to all facets of development and creates students that are independent learners.

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