

THE PROGRESSIVE School

QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR SCHOOL OWNERS, MANAGEMENT, LEADERS, ADMINISTRATORS & PRINCIPALS



EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL TO TRANSFORM INDIA'S DESTINY

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LET'S FOCUS ON LIFE SKILLS!

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SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS: ARE THE SCHOOLS READY?

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Principal, Delhi Public School, Korba



MAKING STUDENTS FUTURE READY!

P C Balasubramaniam
Executive Director & President,
Matrix Business Services India Pvt Ltd



NEED OF THE HOUR: 21ST CENTURY SKILLS!

Dr. Ajay Kant Sharma
Principal, Mithi Gobindram Public School, Bhopal



**EXPERIENTIAL-
LEARNING: MAJOR
STEP TOWARDS
SKILLING**

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MAKING STUDENTS FUTURE READY!

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While the curriculum addresses some needs that are generic to all students, the steps towards 'skill development' to face the future reality is certainly inadequate. While elite schools manage to groom and produce smart, capable, and skilled students who branch out to various professional courses and build an amazing career for themselves, the others especially in small towns end up producing lesser skilled students. Several burgeoning professional course colleges in reality manufacture graduates who end up being unemployed or under employed. What does the industry really want, shares PC Balasubramaniam, Executive Director & President, Matrix Business Services India Pvt Ltd.

Q: What do you think are "The Future Ready" skills the students in the schools should acquire? How do you think the industry/ business houses can support the educational institutions in the continuous monitoring and upgrading of these skills?

Balasubramaniam: The future looks interesting and at the same intriguing, considering the changes happening across industry verticals. More emphasis is being given to renewable energy, green computing, Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Robotics etc. impacting every industry including manufacturing, health care, financial services, computing & analytics, logistics, infrastructure, commerce and even each of our own pedestrian needs. Every industry is facing technological disruption. For instance, the cab aggregating companies like Ola and Uber don't own any vehicle, the room aggregators like Airbnb don't own any hotel or rooms, the largest retailers like Amazon and Flipkart don't own any stores! In effect, the way an enterprise is being built and modelled is witnessing huge changes and hence an exposure and understanding of these changes has assumed paramount importance.

This is the most appropriate time to



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branch out to various professional courses and build an amazing career for themselves, the others especially in small towns end up producing lesser skilled students. Several burgeoning professional course colleges in reality manufacture graduates who end up being unemployed or under employed. These schools cannot be blamed as they are beset with their own challenges on infrastructure, funds, faculties and other relevant requirements. Mere academic score will not make a student future ready. The students also should explore upgrading their skills on their own through various online platforms; mere dependence on school curriculum is not adequate.

I sincerely feel that corporates can do a lot as regards building a strong future ready students by partnering and mentoring the schools across the country. The National

'Make in India' initiative, with IT and BPO industry anyhow giving tremendous opportunities to a majority of the youth, with employment opportunities looking up with growth of infrastructure, e commerce and retailing industry, there is a specific need to groom and build the skill sets of the student population. Based on the capability, interests, and capacity of the students, they can be groomed from their young age to address the skill sets or their professional knowledge and become future ready. The importance and the impact the corporates can bring to the table cannot be undermined and in my view, this could be part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Q: With a lot of manual work getting done through mechanical and robotic



supports, there is a general feeling that there has to be a paradigm shift to the process of skill acquisition. What kind of a paradigm shift do you expect and in which direction?

Balasubramaniam: Technology changes too frequently and it is not possible to keep shifting the process of skill acquisition at school level. However, the curriculum especially relating to science and technology should be drafted with the help of experts in the industry. Science and Technology could be taught more comprehensively at schools. This is where the industry participation has to be loud and concurrent. Schools should also partner with engineering colleges and technical institutions and there could be 'tech skill camps' for select set of students periodically. Though currently such a system exists, not many are aware and not many get the opportunity. This will boost the knowledge as well as the confidence of the students and drive them towards technical excellence and knowledge acquisition.

Q: With several process controls in industries and business houses controlled through Artificial Intelligence, the human intervention in organizational management and industrial operations will have to re-engineer their interventional mechanisms. Therefore, the human knowledge and skill sets need to be redesigned and re-validated. How do you position human cognitive skills coping with such changes as a part of future preparedness?

Balasubramaniam: The focus should be more on creativity and simplification. The cognitive skills should be honed in this manner. Artificial Intelligence may not replace every human intervention in every industry. The investment on AI will be more on critical processes. Some



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early introduction into the fundamentals of AI and Machine Learning and relevant periodic updates on this subject and its impact on the industry could be rolled out.

Q: The organized sector provides much less of employment as compared to unorganized sector. There is a huge opportunity for the work force to be meaningful independent workers and entrepreneurs. This would indeed mean 'self-employability'. What kind of skills do you advocate for successful participation in this sector?

Balasubramaniam: You don't have choices, on the one hand the intellectuals would get into high end, complex and creative work, the qualified ones get into top level and middle level management in corporates and other institutions. Both these sets of people will also have hunger and ability to be self-employed or become entrepreneurs. Normally this category

is risk-averse as they get phenomenal, remunerative and attractive packages and growth path in employment. The situation today is changing a lot where the brilliant minds even from middle class families are venturing into entrepreneurship on account of the entire ecosystem becoming favourable for the start-up entities in the country. These young entrepreneurs certainly need professional coaches and mentors. The growth of such entrepreneurs is extremely critical as their success would increase the employment opportunities and promote inclusive growth. Schools should also create awareness on entrepreneurship and self-employment to the students. Case studies, face-to-face interaction between students and such entrepreneurs would go a long way in motivating the student community to look at 'self-employability' as a great option.

Q: "Work force" also needs continuous upgrading of skills and competencies. Do you foresee a possibility of "further schooling" for them in the regular 'learning environment' for short or medium term 'learning and empowerment' opportunities? How can the infrastructural resources be used for this purpose?

Balasubramaniam: Continuing education and learning is undoubtedly the order of the day for all kinds of work. Without this, the work force may become redundant and non-competitive. Depending upon the industry a company operates, the degree of such continuing education and learning may differ. Some large corporates do run programs internally in upgrading the skills and competencies of their work force and some do sponsor their work force for some external relevant programs. It is imperative that the work force also takes initiative to upgrade its skill sets through various other channels that are available.

But, I also see huge disruption happening sooner or later, the way schools are run. The brick and mortar model will have to be replaced through anytime – anywhere schooling where location doesn't matter. Students can learn through lectures and teachings delivered over the internet. This will ensure that all students have access to high quality faculty and content. The progress will be more towards flipped class rooms. The existing infrastructure in the traditional schools could be deployed for several other activities that need physical presence of the students at one place – for instance for sports and games, creative work, experiments, labs, group discussions and projects, building inter personnel skills and motivation.

