**Educating 21 st Century Child**

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Our younger generation is digitally groomed and equipped with loads of information gathered through internet and social media. They have justifiable reasons to brand themselves as digital natives. They are no longer ready to behave as dumb listeners in their classrooms nor do want their teachers only to deliver lectures. Instead, they want to be heard as equal partners in their learning journey and look for an interactive teaching experience. Therefore, the school mangers, teachers and parents have an uphill task to teach and train this Google generation we may call it.

A total paradigm shift is required to create an enabling academic environment for a productive learning experience. It is an admitted fact that there is a fundamental difference between the two educational paradigms of 20th and 21st century. Classroom learning in developed countries makes only a part of the learning journey whereas more than fifty percent education comes from students’ hands-on experience in community development projects and research assignments.

Besides, the ever rising expectations of school managers and parents are already driving students crazy to score outstanding grades. Therefore, time has already come to make our education more interactive, students-centered and flexible as against teacher-led discourse meant to ignite a mad-rat race for grades alone.

Defining and delivering 21st century learning is messier than what we generally understand. It’s far more complexed and complicated. It is by all means a whole lot harder to assess and execute.

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The happier part of the story is that when done correctly, it creates environments in which engaged students are actively shaping their learning. Thus, the role of educators in the 21st century should be aimed at inspiring creativity, encouraging collaboration, expecting and rewarding critical thinking, and teaching children how to communicate with confidence and clarity. These are skills students need to develop in order to thrive in the dynamic workplaces of today and tomorrow. To be clear, I am not suggesting that children no longer need the 3Rs, or STEM classes, or technical training for a vocational path. I am simply of the view that those things alone aren’t enough. We must also remember that the 4Cs aren’t enough just on their own.

A 21st century education needs to be more than any one or two of these things.  If we want to provide every student with a 21st century education, we must foster deeper learning through the purposeful integration of rigorous academic content with experiences that intentionally cultivate the skills, mindsets, and literacies needed for students to become lifelong learners and contributors in our ever-changing world.

Keeping the above in view, the term “21st century” has become an integral part of educational thinking and planning for the future. Nowadays, we don’t live in the same world. Globalization has opened up the world and allowed people to connect in new and exciting ways. We blend traditions and create unique belief systems that are not taught in any classroom, but are developed through our shared experiences and passions. We transmit our values and cultures without the expectation of them being adopted by our audience, rather just accepted by them. As always, at its core, the role of education is to prepare students to become active, successful, and contributing members of an interdependent global society. In order to prepare students to play their role in the 21st-century society we are a part of, following few things need to be definitely considered when deciding how education will look in our schools and classrooms.

The days of one-way lecturing have long been over – though not entirely. While student-centered learning is strongly encouraged in the 21st century, this does not mean that the teacher can never give a lecture again. Instead, it means that the main source of knowledge in the classroom should not be the teacher. Education is no longer about listening to the teacher talk and absorbing the information as parrots. In order to contribute to society, students will need to be able to acquire new information to cope with problems as they arise. Thus, they will need to connect the new information with the knowledge they already have and apply it to solving the problem at hand.

They will not be able to call upon a teacher for answers, so will need to have ‘learned how to learn’ on their own. In this classroom model, the teacher would act as a facilitator for the students. Instead of passively receiving information, the students would gather information on their own, under the guidance of their teacher. Different learning styles are encouraged, and students have an enhanced sense of motivation and responsibility. They engage in many different types of hands-on activities, as well as demonstrate learning in many different ways. Learning is about discovery, not the memorization of facts.

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Therefore, collaboration should also be dynamic and aimed at celebrating the diversity. Students should learn as to how to recognize different strengths and talents each person can bring to a project, and change roles depending on those attributes. Schools should also be collaborating with other educational institutions around the world to share information and learn about different global best practices or methods that have been developed. They should be willing to alter their instructional methods in light of new advancements and competencies thus shared.

Since we are no longer preparing students for specific tasks and roles, we need to take a more general approach and teach them the skills that are useful in any situation. Lessons have little purpose if they do not have any impact in a student’s life outside of the school.

In the final analysis let’s remember that in order to prepare students as responsible citizens; we need to model what a responsible citizen is all about. Schools will often work at accomplishing this by creating events for the school community, by encouraging students to join committees or take part in various school projects, and by occasionally helping the community around them with activities such as social causes or neighborhood clean-ups. This will help discover their social genius and thus sensitize them to issues confronting the society at large. With the powers of technology and the internet, students of today can do even more. Our community is no longer just the area of space located around the school, but reaches out and envelopes the world.

Therefore, education of today needs to help students take part in this global community and find ways of impacting more than just their neighborhood. This doesn’t mean that they do not need to learn the value of helping others around them and protecting their immediate environment, but that they should also be learning about how they can help and protect a world farther away from them, but also closer all the time. The last and the best thing, parents can and must do under these trying times, is to keep cool and instill confidence in their children irrespective of their grades and performance on campus.

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