

Education and Skilling

Reflections &

Outlook 2021

2021 would see the re-positioning of sectors and strategies basis learnings from 2020

2020 is behind us and it was a strange year...

What went wrong

Healthcare measures surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic caused education institutions to remain shut or strained for an entire academic year, for the first time in the past 70 years. The closures left stakeholders in a lurch and there was a noticeable lack of viable frameworks and adaptable content for remote learning. There was also a lack of opportunity and capacity to access digital resources across geographies. Significant time was spent by educators in unlearning and relearning new ways of engaging their students and navigating the curriculum.

Adapting school level teaching methodologies to digital modes of dissemination was a challenge. On the other hand, higher education institutions faced uncertainty with respect to student entrance examinations and assessments. While Government institutions found it difficult to ramp up, private institutions faced pressure to cut down student fees.

All in all, adverse effects of mental and emotional strain due to this prolonged uncertainty as experienced by students and teachers can only be surmised.

Visible Positives

The National Education Policy was finalized after some delay. Teachers and students have become more accustomed to remote/ online/ digital modes of learning, that have gained impetus like never before. We are on the brink of an alternative schooling model which may hinge heavily on offshoots of the digital, online and blended. The centrality of a brick-and-mortar paradigm is now being questioned with talk of innovations around affordable low-cost schooling leveraging technology.

the NEP, and hopefully will inspire educators to reconfigure pedagogies and assessments to bring about mathematical, scientific and reading literacies connected to a real-world context. While the shift will be challenging but given the recent experience that saw teachers and students co-constructing their learning experience, we may be able to achieve the transformation easier than expected, given the new spirit and appetite for innovation.

The shift to a competency-based curriculum which has been on the anvil for 2 years has got a push under

Certain challenges have come disguised as opportunities, and admission of foreign students in Indian colleges is expected to rise.

...but some challenges still remain...

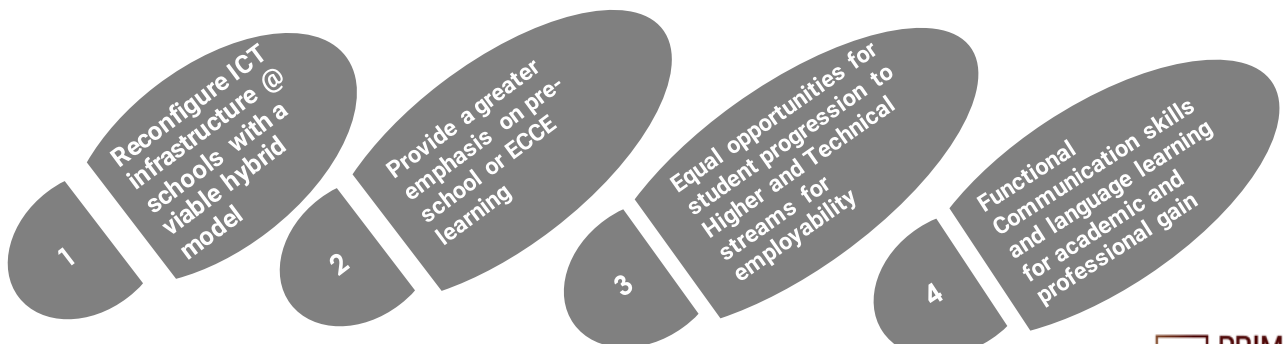
It is still unclear as to when schools will resume and what the 'new normal' would mean for all stakeholders. There needs to be more direction as to how educational institutions would enforce social distancing and hygiene practices. A low number of trained teachers especially those with digital classroom management skills could pose a challenge with the introduction of technology in the classroom.

Communication is required on how students may make up for the lost year and how the learning outcomes of the

previous year will be assessed for progression to the next year. There still remains uncertainty with regard to employment which poses a financial burden for lower income households.

There are also expected challenges from an increase in dropouts due to migration, digital disconnectedness and dwindling finances. There are trends of low rate of placements for vocational or skill-based jobs due to a lack of industry integration and a demand-supply mismatch.

...and the agenda for 2021 should include a focused approach on...



In the macrocosm

1 Impact Investment in Education

There are significant opportunities to attract a greater proportion of impact investment to India to meet educational targets and SDGs. An increasing number of investors may converge their investment for public sector programmes with a multi sector coherence involving government, private sector, youth groups, evangelists, academia, and national and international co-operation.

Investment opportunities lie in increased solutions for infrastructure, school management as well as the provision of services such as ICT and LMS systems, adaptive and digital curriculum and content, teacher training and capacity building. It is time that we reverse engineer the process and direct investment towards sectors or geographies that would benefit the most from it.

The Government's role is therefore that of a custodian for SDGs; catalysing global impact investment into education related sustainable development goals.

2 Teacher Capacities and Learning Outcomes

NEP stresses the importance of standards in classroom practice. Basing teacher practice on standards for a community of practice will encourage equitable quality in education across the country extending to the rural remote.

The high pupil-teacher ratio at school and higher education level as well as the continued prevalence of single teacher schools has been a challenge to the provision of quality education and will need a mix of creative solutions for improving efficiencies and school size and at the same time honouring the promise of

access.

Professional development of teachers is already a priority and the government would need to channel energy behind the reform with sustained and adequate resourcing to enable teachers to adapt to a hybrid or phygital education model, and to shift the focus of the teaching-learning process towards competency-based curriculum. Recruitment and training of teachers also becomes a crucial aspect in this context.

3 Outcome budgeting and monitoring

Education related SDG targets and indicators are foundational in achieving sustainable outcomes over time for other Sustainable Development Goals as well. A concrete step would be for education budgets to be aligned with SDGs through their planning and monitoring processes.

Outcome budgeting and Scheme monitoring will be an effective tool to drive education outcomes as well as help improve the statistical system.

Regular data generation and reporting will help drive capital in the direction that it is most required.

In the macrocosm

4 Kendriya Vidyalayas as Centres of Excellence

Kendriya Vidyalayas enjoy regional representation with over 1200 schools across the country, and as one of the largest school chains reserve the privilege and the potential to demonstrate thought leadership through achievement of the NEP vision.

Therefore, with a grand legacy and promise Kendriya Vidyalayas can be positioned as a microcosm of

educational good practice in the country by remodelling itself as a Centre of Excellence to innovate, nurture and share exemplars in teaching and learning.

The Centre of Excellence at KV can mentor practitioners and provide collaborative handles to other aspiring government and private schools in the country.

5 Language and Higher Education

The urban-rural, socio-economic and language divides in education and life outcomes are inter-linked. The National Education Policy impetus for education in regional / home languages as well as recent government announcement on the provision of engineering education in regional languages would improve learning outcomes and provide educational opportunities for a multitude of students.

In a country as diverse as India, with students with multiple first languages in any one institution, the implementation of these policies remain a challenge. Technology and AI-based solutions for the provision of

curriculum in multiple languages will go a long way in solving for this. At the same time, along with technical education in regional languages, it will be necessary to support students in developing English language skills in parallel, as these have become essential for employability in the modern, globally connected economy.

A greater emphasis needs to be placed on curriculum and pedagogy design, in order to cater to individual student needs

6 Vocational Education

The adoption of vocational education in India remains low. At a school level, perception of vocational education is that it is 'lesser than' academic subjects. The NEP emphasises the vocationalization of education, with government's Samagra Shiksha scheme targeted towards this end. Building industry connects for course selection, curriculum development, teacher training, guest lectures, apprenticeships and placements will be essential to ensure industry relevance of vocational courses. This would ensure that that students are employable, while at

the same time driving industrial growth.

Experiments such as the Happiness Curriculum and Entrepreneurship Mindset Curriculum have been introduced in Delhi government schools are aimed at inculcating the skills necessary for resilient and successful lives. Such programmes may be replicated in other schools across India.

Streamlining financial support, building capabilities across disciplines, transforming pedagogic practices and equipping institutions with phygital infrastructure via the National Education Policy (2020) will be key towards the coming year .

Pulling out all the stops

Few key questions that will need executable answers



How do we make up for the lost year and cross over with resilient solutions?



What are the gaps in infrastructure, classroom abilities, knowledge and content that prevented continuity of learning?



What are the arrangements that can help bridge the divide be it digital, language, rural-urban or skill based?

...and what policy / budget clauses can enable implementing the above...

- 1) **Public Private Partnerships (PPP)** can bring in efficiencies, subject matter expertise, technical assistance and professional management for encouraging learning outcomes, applied practice and accountability. PPP instruments can help bring about transformation with scale and speed and can be particularly helpful in solutions for technology and data driven solutions, assessments, teacher capacities, core academic, technical, and language improvements in the curriculum, and for overall infrastructure improvements. There may be a need to design/re-design PPP instruments keeping in mind hits and misses from previous efforts and experiences.
- 2) **The National Education Policy (2020)** outlined a clear and outcome-based transformation vision for the education sector which includes:
 - A National Assessment Centre, PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) to set guidelines for assessment and evaluation
 - A National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) to be set up to facilitate technology integration for all stakeholders
 - An Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) to be set up to strengthen language offerings across geographies
- The establishment of the Higher Education Commission of India, a regulatory body for higher education institutions
- A National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) and a National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (NCFTE) to set clear standards and build capacities
- 3) **The National Innovation Foundation (NIF)** could be leveraged to partner with educational institutions and recognize traditional knowledge as well as foster research and innovation
- 4) **A National Research Foundation** will be established as well as **MERUs (Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities)** to drive research and knowledge and offer a variety of academic degrees and courses. These will create a confluence of students, industry and academia as well as knowledge-sharing between them
- 5) The impetus on **skilling and vocational education** will be leveraged via offerings for upskilling and reskilling, especially in technology and future skills. Education is intrinsically linked with national building, employability and applicability towards solving real world issues

About Primus Partners

Primus Partners has been set up to partner with clients in 'navigating' India, by experts with decades of experience in doing so for large global firms. Set up on the principle of 'Idea Realization', it brings to bear 'experience in action'.

'Idea Realization'— a unique approach to examine futuristic ideas required for the growth of an organization or a sector or geography, from the perspective of assured on ground implementability.

India is and will continue to be a complex opportunity. Private and Public sector need trusted advisory partners in order to tap into this opportunity. Primus Partners is your go-to trusted Advisory for both public and private sector organizations involved intricately with nation building, and the creation and growth of robust corporations as engines of progress.

Our core strength comes from our founding partners, who are goal-oriented, with extensive hands-on experience and subject-matter expertise, which is well recognized in the industry. Our core founders form a diverse cohort of leaders from both genders with experience across industries (Public Sector, Healthcare, Transport, Education, etc), and with varied specialization (engineers, lawyers, tax professionals, management, etc).

Primus Partners brings experience of working in more than 30 countries with private and public sector, including working with Government of India, building and leading large consulting teams at the leadership level, and creating one of the largest public sector consulting practice in India. They also represent 200 person years of experience in leading global and Indian consulting firms and the public sector.

The founding team is supported by a distinguished advisory board that includes experts with leadership experience across government, large corporate and notable civil society organizations.

Primus Partners Contacts



Nilaya Varma
Co-Founder & CEO



Charu Malhotra
Co-Founder & Managing
Director



Pooja Ahluwalia
Vice President, Head of
Research



Juhi Talwar
Consultant

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