# MONTHLY SECTOR UPDATE

**Issue 4 | Dec 2020**

## Education

**1**

We Believe

**2**

Policy Review:
NEP 2020

**3**

In the Spotlight

**4**

On the Trail

**Technology will not replace
great teachers,
but technology in the hands of
great teachers
can be transformational"**

**- George Couros**

in **Primus Partners India**

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# 1. We Believe

In the quest for equal opportunities, Rye Barcott's phrase "Talent is universal; opportunity is not", which is well on its way to becoming a new age truism, may just need to serve as the corner stone of education reform. The last month has seen several initiatives giving expression to measures symbolising democratisation of opportunity.

In a welcome move the government announced that technical education especially engineering courses will now be made available in regional languages from the next academic year. Promoting the use of regional languages especially in Higher Education will help the cause of universalization of opportunity, or democratisation of learning as it were. Exclusion that occurs on account of language can hopefully be controlled with inclusive measures such as these. A supportive work plan that gives expression to this vision that will extend this provision to multiple streams, strengthen higher education institutions, inspire researched development of content, improve assessment capacities, innovate regulatory mechanisms and leverage a technology backbone to improve learning outcomes and enhance the potential of varied career paths, are some urgent and immediate steps that need to be executed post haste. Some risks and challenges will need to be solved for, like the problem of standardisation given dialect difficulties, need for simplification of vernacular lexicons in academic contexts, and all the challenges faced by a non-English speaking majority largely due to perceptions of a rural-urban divide on the basis of a language divide. This is therefore an opportune moment to rely on innovative institutional structures and instruments like PPP to harness the advantages of participation of multiple stakeholders, specialised talent, professional management, and the possibility of speed and scale to support well intentioned education reforms such as this important milestone of the New Education Policy (NEP).



> "Students need to be given the agency and tools for learning 'how to think' and not 'what to think', so that they can communicate with all their potential using the language they are conversant with"
>
> - Renu Punhani
> Education expert
> Primus Partners

Strategic investors hoping to recover from losses due to COVID are venturing into school O&M via funding, acquiring or merging with franchise school chains. This may revive the interest in good quality affordable education and mitigate fears of feasibility. There are hopes that the new practices over the ether may very likely herald a new wave of digital education by leveraging advantages of technology. 'Municipalisation' of schools is yet another hopeful convergence leading to optimization of school infrastructure with municipal run premises opening themselves to collaboration for use of the school premises in post school hours. Barriers of regulation, compliance and legal support are some hiccups that will need to be tided over.

Progressive programmes like World Bank funded STARS in six states hope to localise the realisation of outcome achievement. The government outlook on outcome budgeting across ministries could see more rigour in tracking and management of learning outcomes at school level. Students are increasingly embodying the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat, as students in Assam exercising agency to bring about change created their own education manifesto for the State along with UNICEF.

**Charu Malhotra**
**Co-Founder & MD**
**Primus Partners**

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# 2. Policy Review: NEP 2020

## Multilingualism

### Breaking free from the "shackles"

As a country with an infamous British colonial history, India has shared a long-term relationship with the English language. Treated as a symbol of respect, dignity and socioeconomic prosperity, fluency in English continues to be a desirable skillset amongst Indians. As we move into a new decade and age for education in India with the New Education Policy, 2020 it is the vision of the Government that we take pride in and leverage the inherent value in our multi-lingual diversity. While the feat is large, we can take reference from advanced nations such as Germany, Japan, France and South Korea that have flourished in all fields with their vernacular as the medium of instruction. Under the aegis of Atmanirbhar Bharat, the promotion of regional languages will enable our educational institutions to fully support a distinctive percentage of our population in winning their own race, without being restrained through a language handicap.

### Promotion of regional languages in School Education

**"Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/ mother tongue/ local language/ regional language…all efforts will be made in preparing high-quality bilingual textbooks and teaching-learning materials".**

By highlighting the fact that younger children find it easier to learn languages and that it has significant cognitive benefits, the policy paper provides a well reasoned justification for encouraging the three-language formula at the school level. The intent is also to ensure that students taught in regional languages are also comfortable with bilingual communication about STEM subjects. This initiative will be supported by sufficient content and teacher training in all regional languages and Indian classical, foreign and sign languages are also to be offered at the secondary level. While there is hope that this change will reduce reliance on rote memorization and increase enrolments of students that can learn in a language that is spoken and familiar to them, the transition to the medium of instruction at senior secondary or higher education needs to be well designed and uninterrupted.

### Promotion of regional languages in Higher Education

**"HEIs to develop more degree courses taught in Indian languages and bilingually…HEIs shall have strong departments with adequate expertise and design programmes in Indian languages".**

A greater emphasis has been made on the use of vernaculars as a medium of instruction in Higher Education Institutes. Teaching–learning resources, e-content and academies are to be created for each of the Schedule 8 languages and a proposed Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) will be established, employing language experts that will promote and preserve Indian languages through Natural Language Processing. While this opens up a range of opportunities for those that rely on their vernacular, it is important to design curriculum to gradually build student capabilities and provide them the requisite support to study in the language of their choice. Whether the intent is to graduate in a regional language or develop competencies in English there needs to be an increase in bilingual teachers and resources. In either case, the vernacular should be treated as a staring point to the desired end.

### Our Take

Our approach towards the multilingual component of the NEP begins with the need to support high ranked institutes to create opportunities in providing courses in regional language. Students should be also be provided with the freedom to write their admission tests and examination in regional languages. Most importantly, we need to structure the creation of researched course content, faculty programmes and dictionaries in regional languages with bilingual explanation of technical terms in English and the vernacular. The course content should include the simplification of lexical structures for text books to make content more comprehensible. Stakeholder involvement is also key, and there is a requirement for the buy in of employers, industry and the educational fraternity. Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat must encourage, incentivise and award "Indianness" and support Indian Firms, businesses, and the MSME ecosystem. Finally, we need to provide policy environments that recognise and encourage Indian Startups and indigenous innovation.

# 3. In the Spotlight

**Taking policy matters into their own hands |** Students in collaboration with UNICEF Assam develop their own education manifesto for the state

Based on opinions shared by young students across Assam via survey, a ten point stipulation has been prepared expressing the requirements of the student community ahead of the impending election in the state. Having faced significant challenges with their education during the COVID-19 closure of physical schools which include limited access to electronic devices as well as interrupted internet and network connections, the students of Assam were on a mission to be heard. Developed by UNICEF and PratYek, an NGO, the manifesto is a holistic compilation of the opinions expressed by 4000 students across the state and include points such as protection from violence, quality healthcare and nutrition, access to education, concerns regarding climate change and a reduction in caste, religious and gender based discrimination. Finding their needs often excluded from the policy narrative, the document was presented to the Chief Minister of Assam that stated the congruence between the points on the manifesto and his gov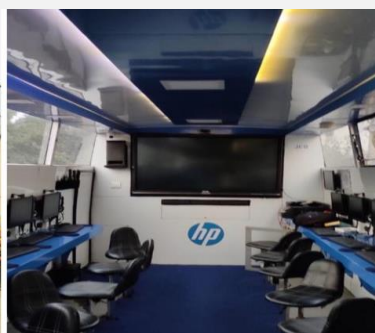ernment's vision. What we can witness from this initiative is that similar to millions of individuals across the globe having faced the realities and repercussions of a national health crisis, students too have been forced to relook and reanalyse their environment and their role within it. They have taken cognisance to the role and impact of policy and wish to stake their own claim on it. The hope is now that key political layers take notice of this earnest attempt as it would bring to realisation the vision of an informed and involved batch of youth, that are ready to take action to change their lived realities.

**Skilling is now mobile |** Buses in Andhra Pradesh to transport digital education to rural areas in the state

In an attempt to fast track the access to digital education, the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation has inaugurated "Skills on Wheels" buses that aim to provide digital education access to at least five villages in each district. The program aims to support three key groups with eleven hours of digital education per day: school going children, unemployed youth and SHG members. This initiative is not the first of its kind and has been previously implemented in Gujarat, with Hewlett Packard providing technical support and expertise. The vehicle presents a perfect example of how technology and innovation can be used to improve outcomes for a large group of individuals. The bus can support 20 students at a time, providing them with e-learning modules on entrepreneurship and skilling with features of a Community Service Centre. It is key that users are taught how to operate the machines so they may be used valuably and efficiently. Such a commodity is precious for the members of communities that often feel disenfranchised, providing them with a sense of purpose.

# 3. On the Trail

## Top News in the Sector

### Is coding a must-have life skill of the future?

With the emphasis on including coding as a subject for secondary school children in the NEP 2020, there are many that view it as a necessary and useful tool, however others still continue to express uncertainty.
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### NCPCR summons CBSE officials over collaboration with social media platforms for children's classes

The CBSE has been summoned by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights amid concerns regarding student safety in using social media through a program developed in association with Facebook on digital safety and online well-being.
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### Why Aishwarya Reddy's Death by Suicide Calls for a Reckoning

The expansion of and reliance on digital solutions in education during the pandemic in addition to administrative negligence on behalf of educational institutions has created further challenges for those that are offline.
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### Joe Biden a friendlier face for Indian students

With the results of the recent presidential election, Indian students are more hopeful towards better policies and increased opportunities in the USA post graduation
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### Prasar Bharati signs MoU with Electronics and IT Ministry to launch 51 education TV channels

The initiative increase the number of education TV channels available is focussed on providing free and continuous access to education across socio-economic strata in the country.
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## Top Sector Player News

### Cabinet approves school education reform project

The Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States (STARS) project partially funded by the World Bank has been approved by the Union Cabinet. The aim is to influence reforms in public administration of education, while increasing the participation of public sector players in the public school system.
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### Audit of 7 Delhi University colleges shows financial irregularities; they blamed govt for cash crunch: Manish Sisodia

Seven colleges in Delhi have been accused of making unauthorised payments and hiding their surplus funds when audited, despite blaming having placed blame on the Delhi Government for not releasing sufficient funds.
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### CBSE Announces Scholarship Scheme For Single Girl Child, Apply By December 10

The CBSE has announced a scholarship for single girl children that have performed well in class 10 and require funds for classes 11 and 12.
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### Meet the 15 inspiring school kids who received the CSIR Innovation Award this year

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) awarded its Innovation Award to 15 school children who's accomplishments include innovations in app development, products and services.
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### ICAI To Launch Virtual Executive Master Programme On November 23; Details Here

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India has developed an online executive masters program to equip students in technology that adapts to changing regulatory and digital practices, while ensuring audit quality.
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# 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.

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