

# MONTHLY SECTOR UPDATE

# EDUCATION



“

Education is our passport  
to the future,  
for tomorrow belongs only  
to the people who prepare for it  
today.”

- Malcolm X

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## We Believe

At a time when schools and colleges still remain shut and amidst the somberness of COVID austerity, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has announced the much awaited New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, heralding forward looking reforms and also the rechristening of MHRD as the Ministry of Education. We welcome the announcements and look forward to the unfolding of initiatives promised in the Policy.

The NEP aspires for public investment in education to touch a mark of 6% of GDP at the earliest and states priority areas for financial outlays, some of these being student safety, ECCE, assessment standards in teacher training etc. This is an aspirational and progressive policy and the government would need to resource the reform indicated in the policy document. While some of the timelines are protracted, still there would be a need for clear lines of budgetary allocation along with a well-defined and transparent regulatory framework.

There is a preponderance of digital integration and online in education bridging the digital divide, on Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence and the entire value chain; measures which acknowledges the need to address the gaps in teaching and learning with technology tools, as was most recently experienced in the COVID times. Notable among these being the establishment of the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF), that will populate research backed practices in school and higher education on deploying technology for teaching learning assessments, governance, and administration. The NEP acknowledges the importance of emergent and disruptive technologies, the importance of understanding the time frame for disruption and the responses from the education eco-system imperative for their emergence – a need which will be plugged in by the NETF. Concomitantly, a dedicated unit in MHRD will look at digital and e-learning synchronizing digital infrastructure, content and capacity building for school and Higher Education.



In addition, the policy recognizes the need for standards in teaching and learning, and assessment, and towards this the development of a common National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST), and the establishment of a National Assessment Centre will provide the trajectory to deliver the promise in the NEP. In a progressive move the focus on board exams, curricular bulk, rote learning, and compartmentalized disciplines has been curtailed.

What we would really like to see the Policy do is to help unpin old approaches by redefining normative practice when we resume the normal or the new normal, as it were and achieve the same with scale and speed. On the back of our recent experience of ‘home learning’ experiments by both private schools and by some state governments, we could be looking at the blended classroom as part of this normative practice, and the announcement of this new policy can truly be the landmark of change in a shifting canvas. Flipped classrooms that encourage independent learning, intra-disciplinary and competency-based curriculum, a shifting focus from content to concept and competencies, comprehension and assessment seamlessly woven together, and standards in teacher practice that aim to progress learning outcomes located in the learners’ context, and skills that will help solve real life problems feature high on the wish list. Going forward one gap that we need to plug, is to recognize and address the lacuna that 21st century skills which are not customarily imparted on an ordinary school – college day, become the corner stone for preparing the youth to embrace life’s journey with the skill to learn, unlearn and relearn as not just a life skill but a life-long skill.

The Policy upholds the potential of education to instill Indianness and to grow the Indian ethos. The Pandemic saw a move away from the synthetic to the natural, and from the foreign to the indigenous. Will this trend in Education spur enthusiasm for the learning of homegrown traditions like Vedic math, Ayurveda, Astrology, Yoga? Research backed practice should allow education ecosystems to sow the seeds for a syncretic flowering on the back of this new policy.

## Steering the Course

### Looking 'up' to Higher Education Institutions | Schools benefiting from adopting university practices

Historically, while the learning outcomes remain fixed, higher educational institutions have always been regarded as pioneers of quality inquiry, research and innovation. Meanwhile, for K12 education, we see a higher incidence on rote learning with the final report card being the indicative component of success. Communicative and collaborative relationships between the two levels of institutions would provide better guidance and support to the learner.

A unique feature of universities are that they are integrated with experts and opportunities to get practical knowledge in relation to various fields and industries. If schools are also approached with this methodology, there would be a greater connection and awareness to the job market and expectations in advance. This would help learners gradually get equipped with the knowledge they might require to find the right career in line with their strengths. Additionally, universities are held to much higher standards and regulations, are expected to have a better penetration of technology as opposed to K12 schools. Similarly, we need to prepare young children for technology-laden jobs and skilling in the future. For an immediate solution, the partnering up of school with universities will give younger learners an opportunity to get a hands-on experience with technology.

In terms of content, the average learner requires a competency based curriculum, pedagogy that focus on understanding and contextual connects, and a practical approach to embed a problem solving process in our curriculum across all subjects at the school level. Heralding a shift in this direction is the NEP 2020 that aims to minimize the academic curriculum and introduce constructivist teaching methodologies that emphasize on understanding and experience based learning techniques.

### To skip or not to skip | The Assessments conundrum

A significant takeaway from the higher education sector the past month has been the toss up between the cancellation of decisive examinations for the academic year and the postponement of these examinations to a later date. With digitization in education not having been implemented universally, while a section of students will be able to give online examinations, another larger section would have to attempt their examinations in person.

The cancellation of examinations will benefit students by eliminating the risk of being exposed to the virus as students would be expected to travel to examination centers to give their examinations in person. However, considering that the confirmed COVID-19 cases show no signs of decline, the longer the examinations are postponed, the greater the health risk the students run. On the other hand, by cancelling the examinations, educational institutions would have to promptly devise other methods for evaluating students performance for the past academic year. The postponement of the examinations however, would ensure that the students and teachers are able to evaluate learning for the year without inconveniencing those that may be facing uncertainty in their final year before graduation.



### The reopening of schools | Social Distancing and other practices

Post consultations on the reopening of schools and the use of digital education held with State Governments, final guidelines are awaiting approval from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Home Affairs. Union School Education Secretary Anita Karwal had stated that while the Centre was framing guidelines for safe reopening of schools, the final decision on reopening dates depended on local conditions within the State or Union Territory on consultations at the institutional level. The guidelines are expected to include thorough screening and quarantine protocols for students, hygiene measures, and alternative or gradual attendance for students allowing for blended learning from classrooms and home.

However, a few concerns will need to be addressed through the guidelines. The infrastructure of most public schools will not be able to support social distancing measure for the large influx of expected students. While maintaining safe distancing practices, there is also a requirement of hygienic WASH services to be made available in schools. These factors are to be taken into account even if a hybrid model is to be followed, wherein schools would have to plan the phased manner in which they would presume services.

The NEP 2020 brings to light these concerns by prioritizing infrastructural upgrades and improvements in order to provide a safe and supportive learning environment that encourages student attendance,



## Innovations in Education



### Using loudspeakers to teach school children

In the absence of digital resources and official physical or online classes, teachers and students are coming up with unique and innovative ways to continue the teaching learning process. At the Bhatpal Panchayat, Bastar District, Chhattisgarh, students are able to attend classes through lessons and instructions delivered through loudspeakers. Reeling from the effect of the nationwide Lockdown on schools and students, this, the Head of the Bhatpal Panchayat has implemented this innovative technique in all

eight of the area's neighborhoods. The loudspeaker acts as a clarion call to students that then proceed to assemble at the local common area where students wear masks, frequently clean their hands using sanitizers and maintain social distancing protocols. According to reports, the loudspeaker technique has not only proven to be beneficial for students but also for the surrounding community. Villagers have come forward, stating that they too have been able to pick up a few English words from listening in on to the children's lessons. Along with academic subjects, students are also taught extracurricular subjects such as art and crafts. Once taught, students also submit homework assigned to them which is then assessed by the teachers in the village. The loudspeakers are also being used to disseminate information regarding good practices to adopt in order to prevent a COVID-19 infection, In response to the adulation received for this initiative, Bastar District has decided to implement it in its remaining Panchayats as well. [Watch Here](#)

### COVID-19 innovations developed at IIT Bombay

The Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay has recently emerged as an innovation leader in value-creating COVID-19 specific technologies. Pre-COVID as well, IIT Bombay had established itself as an entrepreneurial wellspring with the establishment of the Desai Sethi Centre for Entrepreneurship (DSCE). Currently, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) at IITB in association with Government of India have launched the Centre for Augmenting WAR With Covid-19 Health Crisis (CAWACH). The implementation wing, the Society for Innovation



and Entrepreneurship (SINE) at IIT Bombay is the apex body for business incubation, connecting innovation in universities to requirements in Industry. SINE has driven the following innovations:

- 1) **AyuSynk:** Developed by Ayu Devices, a start up under the SINE incubator, AyuSynk uses bluetooth technology to amplify the sounds of the lungs. Using this device, medical professionals are able to diagnose patients without getting physically closer to them. A few Mumbai hospitals have already begun using the AyuSynk.
- 2) **Antibacterial coating for PPE kits:** In order to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, IIT Bombay has developed a textile coating that fortifies masks, and gowns to prevent against the penetration of bacteria and viruses.
- 3) **EmerTech Innovations:** This IIT Bombay firm has partnered with a farming collective to use blockchain technology to provide smooth access to food supplies in Mumbai, Nashik and Pune. [Read Here](#)



## On the Trail

### Top 5 News on the sector

The Cabinet approved the New Education Policy (NEP), 2020 which was last updated in 1986. While many have welcomed the changes in the NEP, deeming it an inclusive documents that sets new bachmarks for education, others believe it may be too ambitious with no clear plan [Read Here](#)

An inability to have consistent access to digital resources is crippling Government school children from attending online classes. According to reports, rate of student engagement is directly proportional to the rate of development in the district or state. [Read Here](#)

In order to reduce the burden of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) syllabus for classes 1 through 10, the NCERT launched an alternative calendar, centered around Competency Based Learning (CBL) as opposed to solely obtaining marks. It stresses on four key aspects: objective, content, pedagogy and assessment. [Read Here](#)

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has developed Alternative Academic Calendars for student self study across all learning levels. The four-week Calendar provides learning outcomes, resources and suggestive activities that can be taken on independently, or with parental guidance. [Read Here](#)

Mock online examinations for Delhi University ended in a frenzy as students across courses faced issues such as network issues, site crashes, problems with logging in, and incorrect question papers being displayed. [Read Here](#)

### Top 5 Sector Player News

EdTech start-ups in India are reaping the benefits of increased investments, while start-ups in other sectors are receiving lesser funding. The growth experienced by EdTech firms over the past few months has already reached levels previously expected in 4-5 years. [Read Here](#)

Current international students to the United States face the risk of deportation as the US Immigration and Custom's Enforcement announces the possible deportation of students whose universities offer fully online classes. The order has also affected thousands of students hoping to enroll in university this year. [Read Here](#)

The University Grants Commission announcement for universities to hold final examinations by September end has been met with a huge outcry against the decision. University students have taken to Twitter to express their disappointment, popularising the statement #SayNoToUGCGuidelines. [Read Here](#)

A disgruntled parent has filed a Public Interest Litigation in the the Supreme Court to cancel examinations for students from the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). The father of the NIOS student stated that the decision to postpone examinations will be detrimental for students wishing to apply for higher education. [Read Here](#)

The Central Board of Secondary Education has partnered with Facebook to develop certified programs on Augmented Reality and Digital Safety and Online Wellbeing, catered towards both teachers and secondary school students. [Read Here](#)



## 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.

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