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Are teachers contributing negatively to society?



RASHMI MARIAN FURTADO
Senior Editor, TheTeacher.in

When we get to know about a CEO of a multinational company, a UN representative, an author, a political leader, a successful businessman, a TV reporter, an institution head, etc., we teachers very proudly say, “She was my student, or he was my student!” I have come across so many teachers and principals who discuss the successes of their students, with immense pride. It’s one of those moments when a teacher feels wonderful and content about her or his profession.

When we read about this, do we teachers take a moment to think, what if the person who committed the crime is our student?

As global citizens, we are aware of all the negativity that exists in this world. The crime and injustice meted against all living beings that we witness deserve nothing but zero tolerance. When we read about this, do we teachers take a moment to think, what if the person who committed the crime is our student? If that person is in fact our student, do we go out into the world and tell people about it? Have we ever wondered, what it would be like, if one of our students has contributed to the negativity in the world?

At an educational conference, Dr. Abdul Kalam once said, “A teacher’s contribution is the sum total of the contribution made by all her students.” Do we teachers want this sum total to be in the positive or negative?

Dear teachers, you don’t have to prove to anybody on how important your profession is, you don’t have to prove to anyone on the amount of

workload you handle in a day, you don't have to prove to anyone that without you the education system of a country will cease to exist! It is but natural for any person to feel demotivated or disillusioned in their profession from time to time. Teachers you are no different. It is very natural for you too, to feel the same and it is not wrong.

You are, however, in a profession where your motivation can contribute positively to the world. You only need to make sure that every student you teach or interact with, contributes positively towards this world and society. Only you can do this! So, in a world, that has a dearth of positivity, you as a teacher, perhaps, have a little choice but to be motivated.

While everyone says the future of the world is in the hands of the children or youth, I believe the future is in the hands of you teachers!

While everyone says the future of the world is in the hands of the children or youth, I believe the future is in the hands of you teachers! Only you can bring about this change and positivity in the hearts of many children, at the same time, so they can make the right choices tomorrow.

From this day on, if you ever feel low, stressed, overworked or impatient, take a moment, close your eyes and do not allow it to consume you. After every class you teach, ask a simple question to yourself, 'Did I leave behind positive energy, did I leave a positive impact?'

Yours Positively!



 @RashmiGreycaps
 @RashmiGreycaps
 Rashmi Furtado

Rashmi

If you have an experience along these lines to share, do write to me on rashmi@greycaps.com

A natural writer, teacher and a passionate content creator, Rashmi has authored the Cu and Rio series and created the Keystones program on Values Education from Greycaps. She is one of the founders of TheTeacher.in. She is a sought after speaker at educational conferences, facilitator programs and for motivational talks to students at schools across India. She holds a Master's Degree from the prestigious NIT Suratkal where she also taught before joining Greycaps. Rashmi is also a popular quiz host for schools, colleges and large corporate audiences. She has co-hosted the Tata Crucible quiz and Travel Quest by Thomas Cook.

New Education Policy (Draft) 2019

Not an Old Wine in a New Bottle

G. BALASUBRAMANIAN

G. Balasubramanian is a doyen of school education in India. He has held several positions of leadership at CBSE, including Director Academics. He was the brain behind the introduction of several innovations at CBSE, which included frontline curriculum, communicative approach to language teaching, Information Technology, alternatives to homework, etc. He is also an author, poet and a sought-after speaker at educational conferences world over.



The New Education Policy (draft) proposed by a committee constituted by the Government of India with Prof. K. Kasturirangan, former Chairman of the ISRO, as its Chairman has been put to public debate. Fifty long years after Kothari Commission report (1968) and after the NEP 1986, this document puts across certain recommendations which appear to be responses to the dynamics of change that impact the way we learn and the way we run the learning organisations. It must be acknowledged that the commission appears to have examined several explosive issues as well as the administrative ills and inadequacies that haunt the education system, and its ethical edifice.

Some of the recommendations of the commission are well thought of, keeping in view the concurrency of the subject and the challenges of co-existence between the Central and the State forces that deal with them. Though the



recommendations have been largely kept in mind, the superiority of the national demands over the states, it has certainly not ignored the local interests. Nevertheless, some of the recommendations appear to be demolishing the citadels of power that commanded the lobbies of educational institutions with their authority and the mandate for 'Inspection Raj' - be it in the field of school education or higher education.

One has to keenly watch how these power centres, who viewed the subject of educational administration from the chambers built in their ivory towers, would respond and react.

To be precise, some of the following suggestions call for close watch with respect to the reactions they would get from the market place.

1) The establishment of Rashtriya Shiksha Ayog (National Education Commission) as the supreme body for all educational policies with a specific recommendation that it may be headed by a person at the level of the Prime Minister. Further, the establishment of State Shiksha Ayogs reporting to the RSA and following its guidelines.

2) The restructuring of the pattern of education from 10 + 2 to 5 + 3 + 3 + 4 which does not appear to any marginal adjustment of the educational hierarchy but is associated with an entire gamut of inputs that impact the thought architecture of their relevance, role and implementation. This also calls for a re-engineering of the curricular architecture and the pedagogical methods in delivering and managing education. Though one may not see any negative responses, the time and level of preparation required to move to new portals is indeed a challenge.

3) The elimination of the idea of 'higher secondary' and 'junior college' as the culmination of a schooling process is certainly likely to challenge both the ecosystems and the egocentricity of those who run institutions using such brands. Making the four-year schooling process as 'secondary' would require a cultural shift in the administration of these institutions and several businesses carried out at these levels for preparing the learners for their onward journeys.

4) The redesign of the Boards of Education as 'Boards of Assessment' depriving them of several functions like affiliation, accreditation, regulation and others is like asking someone to vacate and handover 90 percent of the place they have occupied for several decades. This shift is very bold but needs to be handled with the sensitivity it needs. To add, their role and occupancy in conducting examinations continuously and periodically with several refocused themes to relieve the pain of rote-learning, requires a large-scale preparation both in their thought leadership and in preparing human resources who would understand and facilitate such processes.

5) The suggestion to give a better and a holistic meaning to the word 'curriculum' by removing the 'co-curricular' and 'extra-curricular' activities and making the curriculum more synergetic and synthetic, is proof enough to a forward and wishful thinking. Neuro-cognitive researches have always indicated that learning is a holistic process and is not a piece-meal activity. Integrated, inclusive and multi-disciplinary approach to learning and the curricular architecture is indeed the foundation to creative, constructivist thinking in a connected world. The efforts required to put this process in place is indeed mind-boggling, but if the system engages to give thrust in this direction, I think the future generation of learners would be fortunate.

6) The commission has acknowledged in no uncertain language the evils that seem to be haunting the teacher empowerment, including the award of teacher degrees, teacher deployments, the poor quality of the inputs that go into developing the human resources, their deployment to non-teaching engagements and several others. Though it has called for a fresh thinking in the recruitment drives for teachers, it has suggested shifting the teacher training programmes to multi-disciplinary colleges and universities from a host of private institutions which seem to be playing fake games in the conduct and award of such degrees. Indeed, it would be a step in the right direction. Further, the curriculum and method of teacher development courses require updates relevant to the modern schooling systems.



7) The proposal to have a 'two semesters' approach to the secondary curriculum with examinations at each stage, however giving opportunities for flexibility in the choice and study of subjects is a positive move to shift the learners from the rat-race competition and the stress-prone dynamics of learning. However, it has to be articulated with technology enabled transparent systems in place.

8) The idea of a 'school complex' suggested by the commission is towards facilitating and optimising the resources of the governance to ensure their maximum utility and reach. While in terms its ideals it is commendable, the practicalities associated with its organisation, operation and accountability has to be closely examined so that the real benefits of such a system reach the consumer, and it does not remain as non-operative shared vision.

9) While the document has spelt in clear terms that its focus will be India-centric, and would encourage the understanding of heritage, legacy, culture and native lifestyles, it is equally important to have a global perspective. Any 'myopic' vision would be disastrous. The commission also states in clear terms the need to promote all Indian languages with a multilingualism, the political sensitivities in the issue of administering languages in schools has always been sensitive and needs to be handled with care.

10) There is adequate mention about digital literacy and taking the learners to the world of future. But somewhere there appears to be absence of clarity in putting things in their right perspective.

There are a large number of issues which one could pick up from this document which concern the future of the learning universe either directly or indirectly, but they need to be examined much more closely.

Drafting an education policy for a country like India with its multi-lingual, multi-cultural spectrum is indeed a challenging task. The commission has reasonably done a convincing job. Yes, certainly it is not an old wine in a new bottle. ■

RE-IMAGINING LEARNING

DR. VANDANA GUPTA | Principal,
Euro School, North Campus, Bengaluru

Dr. Vandana Gupta has more than 23 years of experience as a motivator and mentor, both in teaching and administrative capacity in some of the reputed schools. She was a Senior Principal at GEMS Public School, Bhopal and at GEMS International School, Karnal. She was the Founder Principal at Shreejee International School, Sonipat (NCR) and D.A.V Centenary Public School, Karnal (NCR).



Dr. Vandana Gupta is the recipient of many prestigious awards and accolades. ZEE TV Award 2016 as recognition of excellence in the field of outstanding contribution in the sphere of education, Avantika Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Award 2018 for the Best Principal, Nation Builder Award 2018 by IITA, are few of them.

She is currently the Principal of Euro School, North Campus, Bengaluru.

What or who motivated you to become a teacher?

I belong to a family of teachers. My mother was a school principal, her mother was a school principal and my great grandmother was a school teacher so it was something familiar and came easy.

You have taught in schools across the country. How has your experience been so far?

With 23 years of experience behind me now and having worked in both high end and low cost public schools, I think what is worth sharing is the fact that parents in both set ups are discerning, wanting schools that are accountable to them, with high standards and good discipline.

What according to you are some of the challenges that educators face today?

I would here like to refer to quotes from Tony Wagner, author of *Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People Who Will Change the World*.

“The world doesn’t care what you know. What the world cares about is what you do with what you know.”

“The world doesn’t care what you know. What the world cares about is what you do with what you know.”

“Students who only know how to perform well in today’s education system—get good grades and test scores, and earn degrees—will no longer be those who are most likely to succeed. Thriving in the twenty-first century will require real competencies, far more than academic credentials.”

Therefore, the biggest challenge is how to re-image learning and education in this new era. The challenge is to know what it means to be well-educated in the 21st century. About how we can better harness human potential in this fast-changing economy. And, the most important and challenging component for educators is choosing the right curriculum which will help children adopt the growth mindset, since the school and the teacher invest so much of time, energy and resources in rolling out the programme.

How important is Artificial Intelligence and technology in schools and classrooms today?

The world has witnessed a forceful impact of technology in the last one decade and the schools have not been left untouched. Artificial intelligence is also fast becoming a part of our daily reality, so we should anticipate that it will make changes in the realm of education too. We can already see effects of implementing AI in manufacturing and healthcare. Surely Artificial Intelligence will impact the education sector positively and benefit both teachers and students.

What according to you are the values that an institution should impart in its students to help them face the outside world?

I think you have asked me a very valid question. I have now been a principal for almost 15 years and I am yet to come across a parent who has ever enquired about the school curriculum ensuring that the child becomes a good human being and is given values to live by. Unfortunately, their concern has always been grades and participation in school competitions.

Even CBSE says that there is the need for education in values. This is due to the fast erosion of values in our country and the state of growing up of children and youth in the age of instant gratification, shortcuts, insecurities, fear-based survival and existence.

Even though the world changes rapidly, the values that students need to develop are actually not really much different to those that were taught by the bygone generations. It is just the application of those values in the present education and times have changed.

Showing respect to others, for instance, or caring for the environment are just as important as they ever were – and maybe even more so – but they are now applicable in a variety of new ways. For example:

Teaching students to be respectful of others can now be applied to their behaviour online as well as offline. Students should understand the importance of acting responsibly and respectfully when using forums, social media, or mobile devices.

Similarly, good citizenship can now be equally applied to practicing good digital citizenship, whereby students learn to avoid the misuse of information or to acknowledge and respect others' right to peace and privacy.

● **How important are sports and extracurricular activities in school?**

Very important! I have been a national level tennis player myself and studied in one of the most reputed boarding schools in the north. The daily routine constituted getting up at 5 AM and the first thing you did was go for a cross country run and then get ready for your other school activities and studies. So, having done rigorous sports during my school years, I strongly believe that it is not just about physical fitness; it's about practice, preparation, fair play, perseverance, endurance, right attitude and so much more. The lessons learnt can help you steer the ship - that is your life - aright in good times and through bad times. Like in life, you don't always come out on top in sports, but you learn to move on gracefully. Therefore, schools must emphasise on sports as essential part of the curriculum.

It is high time to encourage a breed of superstar teachers, just like Finland does.

When it comes to extracurricular activities, I have observed that students who participate in co-curricular activities show a marked improvement

in their grades too. This can be attributed to skills they learn, such as better time management, to accommodate their hobbies and class activities, better organisational skills and social skills, and a boost in their self-esteem.

● **What are some of the skills that schools should focus on developing in children?**

In a time that's changing and developing so rapidly, we struggle to keep up with the pace and the impact of the exponential growth of technology. Children need to be at the forefront and the schools must provide them the enabling environment to develop the 21st century skills such as -

Learning Skills

**Critical Thinking
Creative Thinking
Collaborating
Communicating**

Literacy Skills

**Information Literacy
Media Literacy
Technology Literacy**

Life Skills

**E.Q
Flexibility
Initiative
Social Skills
Productivity
Leadership**

● **If given a chance to change one thing in the education system today, what would it be and why?**

If given a chance, I think every educator would like to re-define the purpose of education as such. The goal of education system should be to create entrepreneurs, innovators, artists, scientists, thinkers and writers who can establish the foundation of knowledge-based economy rather than the low-quality service provider nation that we are turning into. Assessment is another area we need to look at. It's unjust to judge every child on the same parameter.

Also, it is high time that the mindset changed and teaching jobs were stopped being considered as safe, well-paying, risk-free and low-pressure jobs. It is high time to encourage a breed of superstar teachers, just like Finland does.

● **Your message for teacher and educators...**

For any business to stay current today, you need to change and that goes for education too. Who will ultimately survive is the one who will have the ability to learn, unlearn and relearn and that goes especially for teachers and educators essentially. ■

PUNISHMENT-FREE EDUCATION

SHAMSER BAHADUR THAPA

PERSON OF THE MONTH



Shamsar Bahadur Thapa was one of the Top 50 finalists of the Teacher Prize 2018. He has been a strong voice against the exposure of children to punishment. Based on his own traumatic experiences with education, Shamsar has made it his mission to promote violence-free education in Nepal and has opened two schools to achieve the same.

Early beginnings

Shamsar was born to a farming family in Gaunshahar, Nepal. He attended a local public school and spent his time in the morning and evening helping his family in the farm. He grew up hating school because he was constantly beaten for missing his books. He would often hide in the rice fields, just to avoid being punished in front of the whole class. However, at the age of 16, his perception towards education changed forever. He met an English teacher who was kind and did not punish students, but instead taught them with respect.

Greatly inspired by this teacher, Shamsar was motivated to study hard and become a teacher who could inspire the coming generation of learners.

After nine years of hard work to finance his studies, Shamsar finally became a teacher. He began working in a school in Besishahar. But he was disappointed to see the punishments that he had experienced during his school days, still in practice.

Working for a cause

To make things better and to change the way education works, Shamsar established two schools. His main aim was to teach students the 'non-violent'



means of education. He founded the New Vision Academy and the Heaven Hill Academy. Through these schools, Shamsar began imparting free education to the rural children while breaking the boundaries of segregation and class society that was followed in that area.

Shamsar's Heaven Hill Academy school went on to become the first school in Nepal to abandon traditional authoritarian practices. Shamsar faced opposition from the local authorities and other educational establishments who wanted him to teach in the old, traditional ways. However, he decided to remain firm about his teaching methodologies. Despite these challenges, Shamsar received support from several like-minded headmasters from the area, with whom he discussed issues relating to the teaching practices.

Help from volunteers

The main challenge they face is funding. However, due to the school's immense dedication towards making a change in the society, it receives great financial

support from professional volunteers from all over the world. Volunteers also offer help by bringing in a variety of knowledge and expertise to educate students on how to use computers. The students are also taught in English on a regular basis and are exposed to several cultures to develop a mindset on various kinds of learning outcomes.



Impact

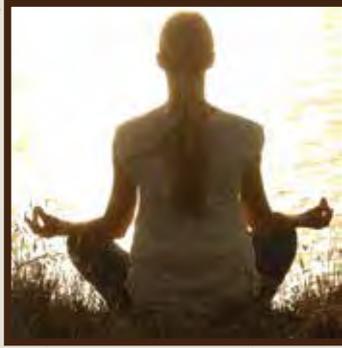
Shamsar's efforts have impacted the lives of several underprivileged children. The school currently provides the poor and lower caste Nepalese children access to education, which also includes the untouchable children, who are in majority in the area. Most importantly, Shamsar fights for the elimination of some practices in schools, such as hitting and punishments, as he firmly believes that it violates the dignity of children and creates a negative learning environment, hindering children's self-empowerment and self-esteem. ■

Source: heavenhillacademynepal.org
globalteacherprize.org

EDUCATION NEWS

England introduces mindfulness and meditation as part of the school curriculum

As children in younger classes do not understand what is going on in their head and cannot find a way to release their feelings, they displace it in the form of tantrums. To address this issue at the grassroot level, schools in England will introduce meditation and mindfulness as a part of the curriculum to improve the overall mental health of the youth. Children across 370 schools in the country will be taught techniques of muscle relaxation, meditation, breathing exercises and mindfulness. Students from secondary school will also get a hands-on education about awareness and, also on how to inculcate this in their daily routine. This is done as a part



of the British government's mental health survey that is running up till 2021.

According to the National Health Survey (NHS), England, one in eight British children have mental disorders and, young children show early onset of anxiety and depression. This study also shows that out of these children, only one in five have access the required treatment.

The major goal of this programme in schools is to help children overcome anxiety and stress, and focus better in class.

Apart from England, in 2016, Baltimore in US replaced detention with breathing and stretching exercises to keep the students calmer.

Plant trees to get a degree: Philippines Government

The Philippines has passed a new law under which each student has to mandatorily plant 10 trees in order to receive the graduation degree.

The move was made by the Philippines government when the forest cover drastically reduced from 70% to 20% because of deforestation.

The bill, which is known as the 'Graduation Legacy for Environment Act', was unanimously passed by the House of Representatives. This law is said to be applicable to schools, colleges and elementary institutions. The rule, if implemented properly will ensure that over 175 million trees are planted in the country each year.

The government has decided the areas where the trees will be planted, and will also include mangrove forests, military reservations and urban areas.

It is said that the local government agencies will be responsible for monitoring the plants, which will include amenities protection, care, nursery, security and medical support to ensure that the plants sustain.



Picture credits - Pixabay

CBSE to reduce the number of objective questions for class 10 exams

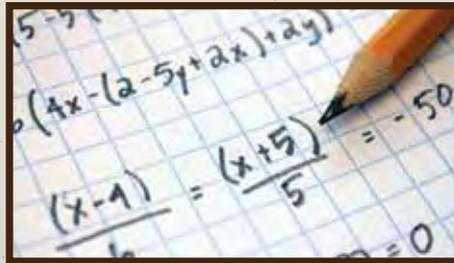
The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is considering changes in the Class 10 examination pattern, by decreasing the number of objective questions and including more questions which will require elaborate answers. This is being considered to ensure creative writing to discourage rote learning.

A senior official from the board stated that these changes will be a part of the routine review, ahead of exams.

The official also mentioned that once the changes are finalised, sample papers will be released to give the students an idea about the pattern, which will help them practice the same before the examinations.

The experts in the board are also considering methods

to diversify the current format, by increasing the marks for each question and reducing the number of questions, to encourage students to write detailed answers. ■





School is a place that brings effective and lasting changes in children. These lasting changes are inculcated within them, right from adolescence. As children are the future of the nations, it is extremely significant to make them realise the importance of sustainable resources. By adopting green practices, children can learn the importance of a safer and a healthier environment.

The Hand-Made School of Rudrapur is a great example of these values and practices. The school has been built by fusing local knowledge and readily

available renewable materials. The school maintains a traditional identity, while embracing modernity in both its form and purpose.

The Beginnings

Located in the village of Rudrapur in Bangladesh, the school is located inside the compound of an NGO called 'Dipshikha' which helps children in rural areas to learn, read and write.

It all began when architect Anna Heringer came to Bangladesh as a volunteer to help this NGO. As part of Anna and her friends' research project for their Diploma, they proposed a compound for the school building, which was already being planned by Dipshikha's METI (Modern Education and Training Institute) Programme. The school was constructed after Anna's graduation.

Anna Heringer learnt to utilise the natural resources in the area in the



Picture credits - archdaily.com



Picture credits - archdaily.com

best possible way. She translated her knowledge into architectural design with METI, along with Eike Roswag and a team of German and Bangladeshi craftsmen.

According to Anna, the building is about the quality of life and a 'celebration of nature's vast resource'.

What's in a name?

The school was hand-built by local craftsmen, children and teachers in collaboration with European volunteers, giving the school its name. The school is also known METI School or METI Hand-Made School.

Approach towards biodiversity

The Hand-Made School offers a sustainable solution, demonstrating how traditional building materials like earth and bamboo can be used to make the building more durable.

During the construction of the building, important technical advances were introduced, like the 'damp-proof course' method. For this building, this technique used brick foundation and mixed straw into the loam.

The building rests on a 50-centimetre deep brick masonry foundation rendered with a cement plaster. The ceiling of the building consists of layering of bamboo sticks, bamboo boards and earth. The ceiling of the ground floor is made of triple layers of bamboo canes, with the central layer arranged perpendicular to the layers above and beneath. This provides lateral stabilisation and a connection between the supporting beams.

A layer of planking made of split bamboo canes is also laid on the central layer, filled with earthen mixture. This is a technique often used in the ceilings of European timber-frame construction. All the bamboo used here are locally harvested. The lower portion of the building is made of rammed straw-infused mud walls.





Natural Light & Ventilation

The building is open and airy. It is wrapped in bamboo slats to bring in natural light which acts as a ventilation system. As the climate here is mild in winters and hot in summers, the thick mud walls act as heat insulators and the thatched roof does not allow the summer heat to enter the building.

The rooms are shaped into 'cave-like' structures where children can read, meditate or play after their lessons are done.

Alternative Teaching Approach

As an alternative teaching method, METI aspires to promote individual capabilities and interests which is reflected in the school's architecture. The space of the school is designed in such a way that it complements the method of learning and teaching.

Awards

In 2007, METI school was awarded the Aga Khan Award for Architecture,



for displaying great sustainable designs with readily available renewable resources.

In 2009, the Curry Stone Design prize was awarded to Anna Heringer for the METI Hand-Made school for a new approach towards sustainable buildings. ■

Source: akdn.org,
archdaily.com
anna-heringer.com

BECOMING A SMART TEACHER



PARAMESWARI JAYAPRAKASH | Teacher, Mahindra World School, Chennai

Parameswari Jayaprakash is a Computer Science teacher at Mahindra World School, Chennai. She has completed her Bachelor of Technology in Information Technology and has 8 years of teaching experience. Parameswari teaches Informatics Practices for senior secondary classes and her lessons utilise technology, giving her students an education that involves professional writing and presentations, internet research, web design and proper communication. She has been selected as the Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert consecutively, for two years.

As part of the government's efforts to modernise the education system and to equip students on par with global standards, it has been decided to implement ICT in the curriculum. Even if there is a Smart Class or projectors fitted in the classroom, if teachers don't know how to use them, then it is of no use. So, I have listed down a few tips for educators to be aware of a few basic ICT skills and ways to use technology in the classroom. This article will empower educators with a deeper knowledge of how technology integration can enhance the teaching and learning

experience, by equipping students with 21st century skills. There are many tools available which can be used by educators for effective teaching. The tool which best suits a concept can be used by teachers in the classroom.



Introducing AI driven features in the educational tools for teachers

■ What is AI?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an area of computer science that emphasises on the creation of intelligent machines that work and react like humans. Here are some of the activities computers with AI are designed to carry out -

- Speech recognition
- Learning
- Planning
- Problem-solving

AI in PowerPoint

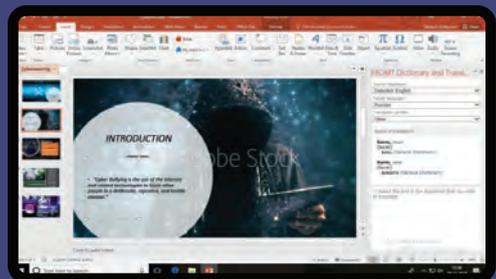
■ Designer

Designer feature helps us to find a suitable design for the respective slide based on the picture and the content. In addition to suggesting designs that will immediately update the look and feel of the presentation, Designer also automatically adjusts to match the colour scheme and specific styling of the template that we are using, hence saving our time.



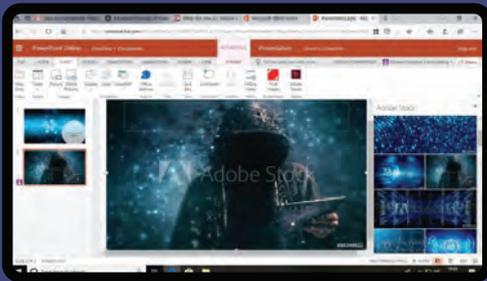
■ Translator

Translate text into a different language.



■ Adobe Stock

Adobe Stock helps us in searching for background images. This provides us with high quality images in a short span of time.



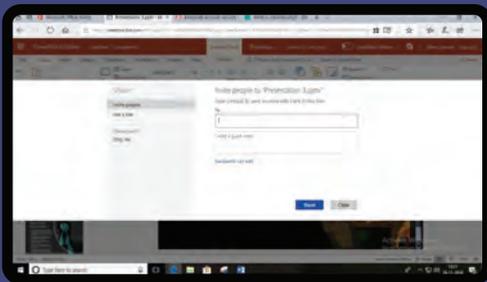
■ Morph

PowerPoint 2016 has introduced a revolutionary transition effect called Morph. This transition enables presenters to animate multiple parts of a slide, which animate as we switch to the slide.



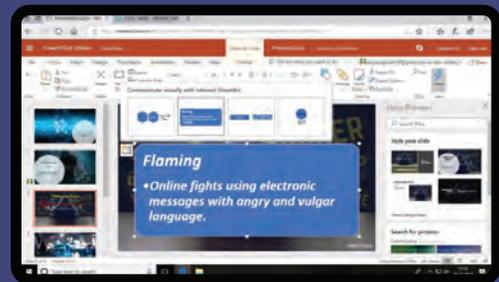
■ Real-Time Collaboration

We can now instantly collaborate with other users in real-time and even see what section each user is working on, by sharing the presentations via OneDrive or SharePoint. Furthermore, we can chat with people using Skype for Business right from within PowerPoint. We can also track activities of people collaborating on our presentation using the Activity Pane.

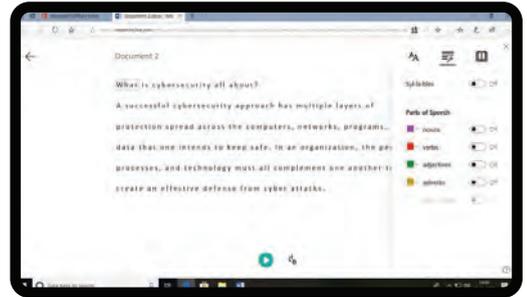
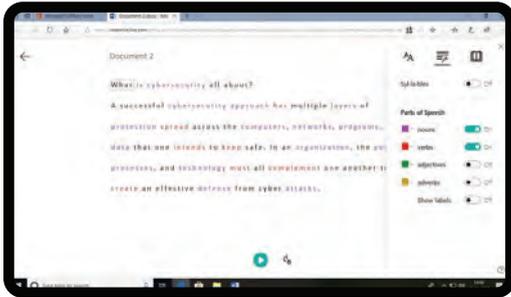


■ Smart Art

Smart Art allows us to get different types of text alignment and shapes for a presentation.



Learning Tools in MS Word



The Immersive Reader feature helps users on any device to improve their reading skills, including those with dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD, emerging readers or a combination of the broad range of unique student abilities.

Learning Tools includes a modified reader view that utilises techniques proven to help people read more effectively, such as:

- **Read Aloud**—Reads text aloud with simultaneous highlighting that improves decoding, fluency and comprehension, while sustaining the readers' focus and attention.
- **Spacing**—Optimises font spacing in a narrow column view to improve reading fluency for users who suffer from visual crowding issues.
- **Syllables**—Shows the breaks between syllables to enhance word recognition and decoding.
- **Parts of Speech**—Supports writing instruction and grammar comprehension by identifying verbs, nouns and adjectives.

This article is committed to harnessing the power of technology to reform education in India and make our teachers future-ready with the essential digital skills. More students are empowered to learn, who in turn may go on to be the creators of even smarter tools to help educate the students of tomorrow. ■

EXPERTS SPEAK



Rama Ranganathan is the founder Principal of National Hill View Public School, Bangalore. She recently handed over the reins, after an enriching and fulfilling seventeen years, answering her calling to reach out and encourage creativity and nurture the quality of excellence among teachers and students alike, and prepare competent and able leaders and heads of institutions!



She has taught at all levels from pre-school to higher secondary classes. She is a teacher of English and History with over thirty years of valuable experience in education.

She has been appointed by CBSE as a member of the Inspection Committee for Affiliation of new schools. She has been a mentor to schools across Bangalore for implementation of the CBSE Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation system. She has also held appointments as the Centre Superintendent for the conduct of the CBSE All India Secondary School Examinations and Head Examiner for evaluation.

Rama Ranganathan is also actively engaged in teacher training with a special focus on effective adherence to performance management for heads of schools and quality systems and creative teaching skills for teachers.

As an effective counsellor, she has been offering students, teachers, parents and others the opportunity to find the desired solutions to their problems through positive interaction, with a high degree of confidentiality!

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My 12-year-old finds it difficult to cope up with school. She is not able to do well in her exams as well. Should I change her method of schooling? Will boarding or home-schooling help? Please suggest.

It is at this age that children especially girls are having to cope with physical, emotional and social stress which may impact their academic performance too. I would believe that you would have already had an open conversation with her and also her teachers to find out which of these is affecting her the most.

Every school will have its own methods of assessment and at middle school, students may initially find the concepts to be of a higher order and volumes enormous.

You may have to pitch in, and with the help of the teachers, prepare a well organised schedule for regular study, which also allows your daughter to pursue her recreational or creative interests. She should feel support and reassurance coming from within the home and school. This will help build her confidence and also instil a higher sense of responsibility in her.

She is in a known environment and testing new waters by shifting the school should be your last resort. It may be a good idea to see if you have answers to a few questions:

- a. What in school is she not able to cope with, is it only academics or anything else?
- b. What are your expectations from your daughter with regard to her performance?
- c. Do you compare her performance against her own earlier performance or compare it with another's performance?
- d. Is your expectation also imposing pressure on her?
- e. Has she set a very high benchmark for herself?

The factors could be any of the following:

- a. Biological changes
- b. Changes in physical appearance
- c. Change of classmates and peer pressure
- d. Change of teachers
- e. Conceptual challenges
- f. Volumes demanding extended hours of study
- g. Communication gaps





WE RECOMMEND



Folk Games

Mancala – The abstract board game

Mancala is a count and capture board game that dates back to 500/700 AD. It is derived from the Arabic word 'manqala', based on the verb 'naqala', which means to move. Mancala boards have also been found in Egyptian tombs.



The game is played between two players. The board for this game is usually made of wood or stone and consists of rows containing a number of cups/pits. Small objects like beans, seeds or nuts are arranged in various ways in the cups. The aim of the game is to redistribute the seeds or beans in such a way that each player captures as many seeds as possible.



Picture credits - ringmar.net

How is it played?

Players place equal number of seeds in the cups or pits of the board. The game begins by a player picking all the seeds from a pit and redistributing it by dropping one seed in each of the consecutive pits, in clockwise or anticlockwise direction.



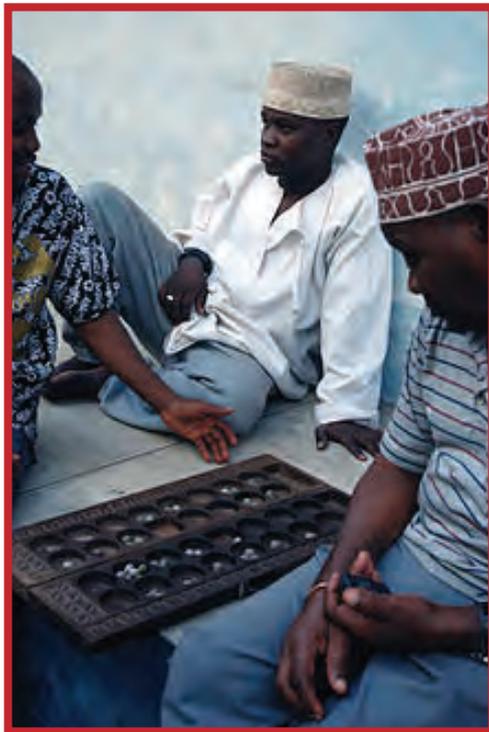


The game continues this way, till each player is left with no seeds. The players then count the number of seeds they have accumulated in the large pit towards the corner of the board. The player with the maximum number of seeds wins the game.

The game is known by various other names like Ali guli mane or pallanguzhi (in South India); Bao (in East Africa); Kalah (in North America) and Congkak (in South Asia).

Why should you play Mancala?

This game not only engages the players but also develops their strategic thinking. Mancala will engage the students in the classroom by teaching them about addition and other numeric operations.



Picture credits - HubPages

It will also help them develop their cognitive skills. The game can also be played by adults, to help in strategic thinking and problem solving. ■

Answers for Quiz of the Month - June 2019

1. Antarctica
2. France
3. Sri Lanka
4. Facebook
5. Malayalam





Does quoting examples waste classroom time?



When I go down the memory lane to my school days, the things I recall the most are the examples that my teachers quoted in class. It helped me remember things better and gave clarity to concepts. I believe examples are necessary tools and definitely not a waste of classroom time.

There is always a better recollection value when examples are quoted. In most cases, children tend to remember the examples first and then recollect the concepts. In a recent interaction with a Senior Principal of a reputed school, she told me her students from 15-20 years ago reach out to her and, tell her how powerful and impacting her examples in class were. She even stated that some students in the exam hall smile to themselves while recollecting the examples to write the answers.

By quoting examples, teachers can try to connect with the students by going down to their level, and by giving them something to remember and connect to. While teaching, the examples teachers give can either be ones that the teacher herself or himself has experienced, a hypothetical situation or a story to allow the students to imagine.

The power of examples cannot be ignored, as they help students think better, think laterally, create an eagerness for the classes to begin, and encourage them to share their experiences and examples. This way, students become active participants and involve themselves in the class. We, teachers, can use this tool effectively to attract their attention and make them the nucleus of the learning process.

Do you have similar instances where examples helped you teach a concept better? Share it with me at varsha@greycaps.com

 Varsha Prasad



Varsha Prasad is leading THE TEACHER.IN initiative from Greycaps, exclusively for teachers, as its Editor. She is also the editor of TheTeacher.in magazine. It is created by Greycaps to celebrate the contributions of our teachers. She has played a vital role in creating many products, which ignite the curiosity of children, including the Global Awareness Program, also known as GAP in schools.

