VOLUME 20 ISSUE 10 | OCTOBER 2025 | RS 50

SCHOOL

Unique Education Journal

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Established 1965

October 2025 Issue

Founder & Chairman
V. Isvarmurti

Managing Editor
Kartik Isvarmurti

Business & Operations
ShanmugaPriya
9945218904

Editorial Coordinator
Praveena Kothakota
praveena@schoolreformer.com

Editorial Associate
Jamuna Ramasarma

Admin & Support
Rajani Jain

Customer Care Number
9620-320-320

Website
www.schoolreformer.com
Email:
editor@schoolreformer.com

Published by
Vadamalai Media (P) Ltd.

Registered Office
Pichanur, Coimbatore-641105

Editorial & Marketing Office
C-2/286, 2-C Cross, 4th Main,
Domlur 2nd Stage, 3rd Phase,
Bangalore - 560 071, INDIA.
wwTel: 9620320320

Printed, Published & Edited by Mrs. Shenbi on behalf of Vadamalai Media Private Limited from C-2/286, 4th Main, 2-C Cross, BDA Layout, Domlur II Stage, III Phase, Bangalore - 560 071 and Printed at Print-O-Graph, No.124, Sultanpet, Bangalore.

The unread teacher: a nation at risk

In today's India, we often speak about the future — of the nation, of our children, of society. But who truly shapes this future? Not politicians or industrialists, not even scientists, but the school teacher. The teacher stands between the wisdom of past generations and the potential of the next. Every lesson is more than mathematics or history; it is preparation for life.

And yet, one truth troubles us: very few teachers in India are serious readers of good books. They earn their degrees, secure positions, and enter classrooms with the mindset of salaried employees. Teaching becomes a job, not a calling. But teaching is not like any other profession. It does not produce goods or services — it produces generations of citizens.

A teacher who does not read is like a doctor who never updates his knowledge. Reading is the lifeblood of teaching. It should extend far beyond textbooks — into history, philosophy, literature, science, and biography. Only then can teachers broaden the horizons of their students.

Children quickly sense whether a teacher is intellectually alive. A line from Gandhi, a story from Tagore, or an image from Carl Sagan brings lessons alive. That spark comes only from reading. Without it, teaching slips into rote instruction — dull, mechanical, uninspiring.

Sadly, our schools are filled with teachers who stop at the syllabus. The lesson ends where the exam begins. Only a handful inspire beyond the textbook. A recent case illustrates this decline: a century-old public school advertised for a headmaster. Over 200 applied, but not one stood out for vision or scholarship. The final choice was made not for intellectual merit, but for institutional familiarity. This shows how shallow our pool of committed educators has become.

The consequences are serious. If teachers are not readers, students are denied role models. They may earn degrees, but they will not learn to think critically or imagine boldly. The teacher is the living textbook. Students may forget details of lessons, but they never forget a teacher's example of curiosity and depth. If teachers stop reading, we risk raising generations equally uninspired.

We must revive a culture of reading among teachers. Schools should encourage them to read at least one serious book a month, and hold discussions around it. Training programs should include exposure to literature, philosophy, and history. Teacher book clubs and reading circles should be as common as student activities. Above all, society must respect teaching as a vocation that demands constant learning, and provide libraries, resources, and time for it.

To every teacher reading this: when did you last pick up a book outside your subject? If the answer troubles you, let that discomfort spark change. Read not for exams or promotions, but for your own growth and for your students.

India's future depends on what kind of teachers its children meet. If teachers rediscover the joy of reading, they will once again become intellectual leaders. Let this issue be a challenge: pick up a book, read it, and share it with your students. In doing so, you light the path for the nation's future. For in every classroom, the teacher's mind becomes the seedbed of the nation's destiny.

LETTERS TO EDITOR

ARE PARENTS THE BEST GUIDES FOR EDUCATION?

Sir,
I read with deep agreement your September editorial, "Are parents the best guides for education?" The article held up a mirror to many of us. As a parent of two children in high school, I admit that I too have often equated success with marks and ranks. The editorial rightly pointed out how, in India, parents' concern slips into control, and our children's individuality is sometimes lost in the process.
I grew up in a family where medicine and engineering were considered the only respectable careers. Without questioning, I pushed my elder daughter into preparing for engineering entrance tests. She cleared them, but today she admits she never enjoyed the subject. Reading your piece made me reflect on how I could have encouraged her love for literature, which I brushed aside as "just a hobby."
What touched me most was your reminder that parents must be companions, not controllers. This is not an easy shift, but I see its necessity. With my younger child, I now try to ask not "How many marks did you score?" but "What did you learn? What new idea excited you?" The difference in our conversations is already visible.
Your editorial is a timely wake-up call. For our children to truly flourish, parents must indeed trust them to walk their own paths. I hope more parents read your words and find the courage to step back.

Yours sincerely,
Anjali Rao
Parent, Chennai

Sir,
I must respectfully disagree with your September editorial, "Are parents the best guides for education?" While your arguments sound appealing in theory, they underestimate the harsh realities of Indian life.
Parents, especially in middle-class families, cannot afford to simply "step back" and let children "discover themselves." Unlike Western societies, our safety net is weak, and jobs are scarce. If parents do not ensure their children follow secure career paths, who will take responsibility when dreams fail? Asking a 16- or 17-year-old to make independent choices without guidance is risky, even reckless.
You argue that parents push children into STEM streams at the cost of creativity. But let us be practical — how many stable jobs exist in poetry, philosophy, or fine arts? Yes, passion is important, but passion without employment leads to frustration. Parents cannot ignore this truth.
I also believe the so-called "obsession with marks" is a survival instinct. Entrance exams and cut-offs decide college admissions and scholarships. Parents who track marks closely are not control freaks, but realists preparing their children for a tough world.
Of course, there are cases where excessive pressure harms children. But dismissing the parental role as interference is unfair. Most of us sacrifice deeply so that our children may have better lives. Instead of asking parents to withdraw, schools and society should create more avenues where secure jobs exist across disciplines. Until then, guiding children firmly is not just a parental right but a duty.

Yours faithfully,
Rajesh Malhotra
Parent, New Delhi

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We want to hear from you!

Our editorials spark debate and reflection on the future of school education in India — but the conversation isn't complete without your input.

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DELHI NOTIFIES LAW TO CHECK ARBITRARY FEE HIKES IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

The Delhi government has notified the Delhi School Education (Transparency in Fixation and Regulation of Fees) Act, 2025, aimed at curbing arbitrary fee increases in private schools. The law, passed by the Delhi Assembly on August 8, now extends to all 1,700 private schools in the capital, a significant expansion from the earlier 1973 law that covered only about 300 institutions.
Under the Act, parents will have a formal role in the fee-fixation process, including veto power on proposed hikes. Any school raising fees without government approval can face penalties ranging from ₹1 lakh to ₹10 lakh, with double fines if excess charges are not refunded. The Director of Education has been given quasi-judicial powers equivalent to a Sub-Divisional Magistrate to enforce compliance.
The law mandates a clear timeline: school-level committees must decide by July 15 each year, district-level by July 30, and final clearance by September. Unresolved cases within 45 days will move to an appellate committee.
While many parents welcomed the strict penalties and oversight, some expressed concern about the absence of mandatory audits and the composition of school-level committees, warning that management could still dominate.

MAHARASHTRA MAKES STUDENT CLUBS MANDATORY IN ALL SCHOOLS

In alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) has directed all schools under the State Board to establish mandatory student clubs (Vidyarthi Samuha) by September 15, 2025. The initiative applies to Classes I–XII and requires every student to join at least one club.
Schools have been asked to create clubs across both academic and interest-based areas—ranging from Mathematics, Reading, General Knowledge, and History to Gardening, Environment, Economics, Arts, Sports, and Social Service. While 30 suggested categories have been circulated, institutions may also introduce clubs tailored to local needs and student interests.
Initially, teachers will mentor and guide these groups, but over the next two to three years, clubs are expected to become student-led forums, encouraging independence, leadership, and teamwork. Students will gradually take charge of planning, organising, and executing activities. The District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET) will monitor implementation and progress, with SCERT providing detailed guidelines and curricula.
Designed to extend learning beyond the classroom, the program aims to foster creativity, collaboration, and practical skills. Participation will be recognised with certificates, encouraging students to explore new interests while strengthening holistic growth.
has ordered maintaining status quo (i.e. halting merger/pairing) for certain schools until hearing on September 1.
In response, the government clarified that schools with 50 or more students won't be merged, and that schools more than 1 km apart also should not be paired. The state also insists no school is permanently closed, staffing won't be reduced, and that many campus sites of merged schools may be repurposed as Bal Vatikas (pre-primary centres).

87,000 RAJASTHAN CLASSROOMS FOUND UNSAFE AFTER ROOF COLLAPSE TRAGEDY

A preliminary government survey of 63,000 schools in Rajasthan has revealed that nearly 87,000 classrooms are completely dilapidated, raising serious safety concerns in the state's education infrastructure. The survey was ordered af-

ter a tragic roof collapse in Jhalawar in July killed seven students and injured eight.

According to the findings, 5,667 schools were marked fully dilapidated, while 16% of all classrooms across the state require major repair. Of Rajasthan's 5.14 lakh classrooms, 2.91 lakh were declared safe, but another 2.1 lakh need varying degrees of repair. Toilets too were affected, with over 17,000 declared unusable.

Taking suo motu cognisance, the Rajasthan High Court has barred the government from using any unsafe school buildings until further orders, directing alternative arrangements for students and demanding a technical report by September 4.

The state government has since launched technical verification drives and announced plans to link all unsafe buildings to a GIS-based monitoring system. Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma also secured ₹3,900 crore in central funding under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan and ICT upgrades, while ₹175 crore has already been allocated for immediate repairs in 2,000 schools.

Officials admit initial survey figures may be inflated due to panic after the Jhalawar tragedy but stress urgent action is underway to prevent further disasters.

OVER HALF OF ODISHA'S STUDENTS RELY ON PRIVATE COACHING: SURVEY

More than 57% of school students in Odisha depend on private coaching to understand their lessons, according to the Centre's Comprehensive Modular Survey (CMS) on Education 2025, part of the 80th round of the National Sample Survey. The trend is especially pronounced in urban areas (66.6%) compared to rural (54.6%).

At the secondary level (Classes IX–X), reliance is highest, with 68.7% of students taking coaching. Even at the pre-primary stage, 34.2% of children are receiving tuition from parents or guardians.

The survey highlights a sharp divide in costs: urban families spend an average of ₹10,899 annually per student on coaching, while rural households spend ₹3,547. Expenses also rise with grade level, from ₹1,238 at pre-primary to over ₹10,400 at higher secondary.

Schooling costs in Odisha show a wide gap between government and private institutions. Families spend ₹1,196 per student annually in government primary schools, compared with ₹24,527 in private schools. At the higher secondary level, costs rise to ₹8,117 (government) and ₹40,147 (private). Across all schools, the largest expenses are on course fees (₹14,145) and transportation (₹4,438).

Despite these rising costs, 92% of students rely on household funding, with just 2.3% supported by government scholarships. Notably, 80.8% of Odisha's students remain enrolled in government schools.

TABLET-BASED LEARNING DOUBLES STUDENT PROGRESS IN ANDHRA PRADESH SCHOOLS

A major evaluation study led by Nobel laureate Michael Kremer has found that tablet-based Personalised Adaptive Learning (PAL) software has more than doubled student progress in Andhra Pradesh's government schools, positioning it as one of the most cost-effective education solutions globally.

The trial, conducted by the University of Chicago's Development Innovation Lab with the state government and Central Square Foundation, followed over 14,000 students across 1,200 schools between 2023 and 2025. Students using PAL learnt at 2.3 times the rate of peers taught through traditional methods, gaining the equivalent of 1.9 extra years of schooling in just 17 months. Gains were consistent across Classes 6–9, with girls benefitting even more than boys, helping narrow gender gaps.

PAL, developed by ConveGenius, adapts lessons to each child's ability, addressing long-standing challenges of wide variation in learning levels and inconsistent teaching standards. At an annual cost of just ₹1,700–2,100 per student, the pro-

gram is affordable for public budgets.
The Andhra Pradesh government, which has implemented PAL since 2019 using Samagra Shiksha funds, now plans to expand it to PM-SHRI and secondary schools, using Chromebooks for longer durability. Experts say the results offer a blueprint for scaling personalised, tech-enabled learning nationally.

TAMIL NADU SHUTS 208 SCHOOLS AMID FALLING ENROLMENTS

Tamil Nadu's Department of Elementary Education (DEE) has ordered the temporary closure of 208 state-run primary and middle schools for the 2024–25 academic year after they reported zero new admissions. In total, 1,204 schools across the state—including 114 government-aided, 11 partially funded, 869 private, and two Central government institutions—saw no enrolments this year.
Among government-run schools, 157 fall under the School Education Department, with others under the Adi Dravida Welfare (13), Social Welfare (19), and Tribal Welfare (8) departments. DEE officials emphasised the closures are not permanent, noting operations will resume if enrolments recover.
The decline is most pronounced in rural and remote areas, where factors like urban migration, parents preferring English-medium private schools, and shifting livelihoods are reducing demand. Demographic changes are also central: Tamil Nadu's total fertility rate has fallen to 1.54 (2021–25), well below the replacement level of 2.1. Public Health data shows live births declined by 6.2% year-on-year, from 9.02 lakh in 2023 to 8.46 lakh in 2024. Education officials warn that if these trends persist, Tamil Nadu may need a long-term restructuring of school infrastructure, staffing, and planning, reshaping the state's educational landscape.

EXPERTS URGE KARNATAKA TO SCRAP FACIAL RECOGNITION IN SCHOOLS

The Karnataka government's plan to introduce an AI-driven facial recognition attendance system in schools has triggered strong opposition from educationists, child rights groups, and civil society organisations. The proposal, highlighted in the 2025–26 state budget, seeks to link facial scans with the Students Achievement Tracking System (SATS) to monitor absenteeism and track beneficiaries of welfare schemes like midday meals.
In a joint letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, 31 organisations and experts warned that collecting and storing children's biometric data poses serious risks. They cited India's weak data protection environment, noting past cases where student records were misused commercially, and cautioned that facial images could be exploited for surveillance, trafficking, or even sexual exploitation through AI-based image morphing.
Critics stressed that classrooms must remain safe spaces, not surveillance zones, and argued that technology cannot substitute for community-based accountability. Strengthening School Development and Monitoring Committees would be a more effective and safer way to improve attendance and oversight.

Globally, several countries—including China—have restricted or banned facial recognition in schools, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education has called for a worldwide prohibition. Opponents in Karnataka are urging the state to follow suit and ban facial recognition in education altogether.

2,245 TELANGANA SCHOOLS RECORD ZERO ENROLMENTS; MODEL SCHOOLS FACE VACANCIES

The Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) 2024–25 has revealed that 2,245 schools in Telangana had no student enrolments this year, the second-highest figure in India after West Bengal (3,812). This marks a steady increase from 1,672 such schools in 2022–23 and 2,097 in 2023–24, even as the national number of "empty schools" has fallen from 6,054 to 5,001 over

the same period. Of Telangana's 43,154 schools, many affected institutions are located in rural or remote areas with poor transport, where parents increasingly prefer private schools.

At the same time, Telangana's Model Schools—set up a decade ago to provide free, quality education—are struggling to fill seats. For 2025–26, around 50,718 of 1.59 lakh seats across 194 model schools remain vacant, a sharp drop from last year's 1.3 lakh admissions. The steepest decline is in Intermediate streams like MEC (Mathematics, Economics, Commerce) and CEC (Civics, Economics, Commerce), with over 9,400 seats unfilled.

Officials cite competition from newly opened social welfare residential schools (starting from Class 5), remote locations, and lack of transport facilities. Plans are underway to phase out unpopular streams and introduce new courses, while spot admissions are being offered to boost enrolment.

KERALA TO AWARD GRACE MARKS FOR READING HABITS FROM 2026

In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the Kerala government will begin awarding grace marks to students for cultivating reading habits from the next academic year. The scheme, announced by the Department of General Education, is designed to encourage children to develop a lifelong engagement with books beyond their prescribed curriculum.

Under the plan, students will receive additional marks in their annual examinations if they regularly read books from approved reading lists and participate in school-level reading programmes. Teachers will track students' progress through library registers, book reviews, and discussions, ensuring that the incentive is tied to genuine participation rather than token activity.

Education officials said the scheme aligns with the state's efforts to integrate library-based learning and co-curricular reading practices into mainstream education. It builds on Kerala's long-standing reputation for high literacy rates, seeking to go beyond literacy towards critical thinking, creativity, and independent learning.

The initiative will also support school libraries with curated book collections and digital reading resources, aiming to counter the decline in recreational reading among students. Officials believe it could serve as a model for other states to combine academic incentives with cultural enrichment.

SCHOOL EXCLUSION AND TRUANCY DEEPEN MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS: UCL STUDY

A major study from University College London's Institute of Education has found that school exclusion and truancy are closely linked to mental health problems in children – and the relationship runs both ways. Using data from over 15,000 UK children born between 2000 and 2002, researchers showed that children with early emotional or behavioural problems were more likely to be excluded or truant during secondary school. In turn, exclusion and truancy themselves worsened mental health, creating a vicious cycle of disadvantage.

The study found that boys excluded in secondary school experienced higher levels of depression and anxiety lasting into late adolescence, while both boys and girls who were excluded developed greater behavioural problems in early adolescence. Truants were also more likely to suffer long-term emotional difficulties.

The research highlights that missing school damages both academic achievement and well-being, cutting children off from formative peer and teacher interactions. Authors stress the need for early interventions in child mental health, including school-based social-emotional learning and sports programmes that strengthen students' sense of belonging. The findings also suggest that alternatives to exclusion, particularly for boys, could help prevent lasting mental health harm.

Chitra Venkatesan

Children learn in different ways

Chitra Venkatesan, Principal, Indo Scott School, based at Pune, explains how in a classroom, students learn in different ways, and why teachers need to use many teaching strategies.

By diverse teaching strategies, we mean the strategies that make the students understand the content and learn with fun. There are many strategies. Lecture-based learning is the one that we use in classrooms to discuss the content. The visual students learn through flashcards or charts, experiential learning is done through field trips, and active learning is about having group discussions to generate ideas with different perspectives. Collaborative learning is when children are involved in inquiry-based learning. We should encourage the students to ask questions because students learn by working on experiments and activities. They use online resources and projects to understand a concept. The differentiated instructions help educators to change the teaching methods to cater to all kinds of learners.

The reason we need a variety of teaching strategies is well explained by the Learning Pyramid. It shows that different methods lead to different levels of knowledge retention — from passive activities like listening and reading, to active ones like discussion, practice, and teaching others. The more actively students engage, the deeper and longer-lasting their learning becomes. Hence, multiple strategies are essential to cater to diverse learners and maximize understanding."

By teaching others or through collaborative learning, children retain 90% of the content taught in the class. By hands-on activity and demonstration, they retain 75% of the learning. By way of demonstration and audiovisual, because by seeing a flashcard or audio, the retention is up to 20%. By reading content, the retention level is 10% and only 5% is retained through the lecture-based method. Such strategies are needed as different learners will learn using different styles, and these make the students actively participate in their learning. They also promote problem-solving skills and critical thinking to analyse the situation, evaluate, and generate new ideas to solve problems, involving the students in the learning process rather than being passive listeners. Inclusive education for diversified learners will be offered with equal opportunities for all. The children will be treated equally with equal access to all learning materials. The percentage of retention is higher when we use diverse teaching strategies. They promote engagement and equality for children from various backgrounds.

ENGAGING EVERY STUDENT

Differentiated instruction is essential for catering to the diverse needs of learners with varying learning abilities. It helps us to vary our teaching methods and use materials to suit the needs of the students, give equal access to learning content, and engage with learning. We need to assess the students by using a written assessment to know about their strengths, weaknesses, and we have to plan the instructions accordingly, including activities in our plans, and implement them in the classroom. There are a few aspects of differentiated instruction. The first one is content, which is what the students learn in the classroom, and which they may not find easy to learn. Here, we have to break the working level according to the students' learning

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capacity. Next comes the process, which is how the students learn. Depending on the learning ability of the students, the tasks can be allotted, such as writing an essay, reading the content, or using technology to create a presentation and access the materials. Then comes a product that talks about how the students demonstrate. Content is delivered in the class.

To assess how well students have understood a concept, flexible methods of expression can be adopted. Students may present their learning through a presentation, essay, video, diagram, or other creative formats. Such flexibility allows them to demonstrate their understanding in ways that suit their strengths and interests.

Equally important is the learning atmosphere. Some students may prefer working individually, while others learn better in pairs or groups. Providing these options not only supports different learning preferences but also helps students develop essential skills such as teamwork, collaboration, and appreciating diverse perspectives. In this way, assessment becomes both a measure of learning and a tool for building life skills.

We should know why the strategies should be implemented in the classroom and how to do it. Mapping the curriculum is important, and we must create a detailed lesson plan to meet the educational standards and content requirements. Based on this, we have to make it inclusive, which means we need to have diverse perspectives to be included in the lesson plan, keeping in mind the different learning styles of the learners and the equal opportunities for all of them. Implementing this in the classroom involves several key techniques. First, a positive learning atmosphere must be created by understanding students' needs and offering continuous reinforcement, so good practices become part of daily learning. Second, flexible grouping should be encouraged—some students may prefer working individually, while others thrive in pairs or groups. Allowing them to choose based on their strengths and needs ensures a more meaningful and personalized learning experience. Finally, an adaptive learning environment can be established by integrating technology, providing varied workstations, encouraging role play, and engaging students in diverse activities. These strategies make learning dynamic, inclusive, and better aligned with students' individual learning styles.

At this time, it is important to make them feel valued and have, sense of belongingness in the classroom. We can understand their thought process, experiences, and empathise with them. They should be treated with respect. All these make the classroom a wonderful place to learn. We can follow different engaging methods, such as in a chemistry class where learning the formula is tough, we need to follow gamification to make it simple. We can make the students disguise themselves as a particular element; each of them has to learn the properties and demonstrate them for the class. We can also follow puzzles, a crossword game, which will reduce the difficulty in learning. It will also improve retention. Making them do a project and present it to the classroom will make the students understand the concept better, more interactive, and engaging.

As we know from the learning pyramid, about 90% of the knowledge is retained by the learners through peer teaching only. The group work, discussions, and peer tutoring help and support the learner to have a better understanding, interaction, and retention. They continue to have fruitful discussions, share knowledge, understand various perspectives, and support each other while learning.

Read the full length article on SchoolReformer.com Blog.

Contact:
Chitra Venkatesan
Principal,Indo Scots Global School
Pune, Maharashtra
M: 8412019209
E: cvenk19791@gmail.com

Monica Khanna

Accept AI and work with it

Monica Khanna, IB-PYP Coordinator II, Curriculum Coordinator-K12 II, Design thinking practitioner, Indus International School, Bangalore says that the rise of AI is reshaping education, requiring educators to adapt to new roles, challenges, and opportunities.

With changing expectations from students and parents, staying aligned with the times has become essential, and by embracing unlearning and relearning, teachers can remain relevant and create meaningful learning experiences in the classroom.

All these years, we would never have imagined that the two words educators and intelligence would come together in our times, at least. But technology is evolving so fast that we are expected to work with AI now, and we are doing it. The entire landscape of education is changing with AI, and the educators are taking up new roles, facing challenges, overcoming them, and following AI. Along with this, the expectations of students and parents have also changed. It becomes mandatory for all of us to change with the times and re-roll, as it is important for us, educators. We have to keep unlearning and relearning to bring out the best in ourselves for the students in the classrooms.

The word AI is being discussed everywhere nowadays and is impacting most of our lives in both positive and negative ways. AI is the use of computer systems to stimulate the human brain to interpret and generate language. A few years ago, it was not taken very seriously by us, but it has taken the stage now. This has happened because technology is evolving very fast, and we are also expected to keep pace with it when using the same. It is said that within 18 hours of a new phone or television coming up in the market, another newer version is already in the market. Such is the speed of technology now.

Some of the examples of AI are chatbots, which we use for conversation every day now. Smart assistants are helping us in our

everyday lives. We have electronic payments, search algorithms, smart devices, media, text editors, social media, etc. Whatever we use today has some relevance to AI now. We can even say it has become almost an extension of ourselves. We have all become used to looking at the mobile phone every 10 minutes in the midst of our work, checking for calls or news updates. We cannot fight against this habit anymore. But we must go with the tide. We may be surprised to see how a video released in the year 1960 had some elements that we are using in today's world. This video of The Jetsons contains many elements, such as virtual conversation that resembles our Skype or video calls we make today, the flying cards, treadmills, etc. Many such inventions are coming up. Whatever we said many years ago is becoming a reality now. As educators, we must be prepared for the future and add value-added experience for the students.In yet another image, we see that there is no school building, but students are learning by themselves using a VR set and tablets. They are learning many new things, such as science, math, the solar system, and even astrophysics. It may not be an exaggeration

to say that this type of schooling will be started in the future. There may not be any teachers, but the children will be getting the content knowledge through the teachers working on the technology. This scenario is not too far off for us. So, we, as educators, should re-roll ourselves; we can no longer afford to be the ones who used to do a bit of research and deliver lessons to the students. We have to reconsider our future, changing the education scenario, AI, etc. We may not know if jobs will exist in the future, as many jobs have become obsolete now and are no longer in existence. AI has taken over content creation. An architect, when asked how AI was impacting his profession, said that previously he used to discuss with the customers about their requirements, the colour finishes, and the materials to be used. But now AI has taken over all these, giving a visual representation of their requirements. Earlier, there were fewer avenues to know exactly the requirements of the customers, and so there were lots of errors. But now the architect has lots of opportunities to present various views of the house using AI, and it is easier for him to work on the customers' requirements. He is using AI to his advantage. In the same way, we, as educators, can also use AI for the benefit of education. We often feel that AI is something ethical, as educators are expected to be creative in coming up with content that benefits the students. When we have AI, it can be used for the betterment of the content. We can collaborate with AI to improve differentiation and feedback. We have to understand that each classroom has students of diverse needs at various levels. It is not very easy to cater to all of them. So, it becomes essential that we collaborate with AI to add more value to the lessons and get feedback from students. The content delivery can be done by AI. So, it becomes important for teachers to change their roles from being an educator to a mentor and to be a guide for the students. We have to work on their social and emotional needs, help them learn through inquiry-based learning, kindle their curiosity, and make them ask questions to get a better understanding, which only a teacher can do. There are many AI tools that teachers can use to improve their understanding of AI and use them. We can attend workshops, read materials, and make every effort to keep abreast, which is not only essential for the students but also for the teachers. We can make use of ChatGPT, Claude, to generate lesson plans, assessments, and learn various learning methods. Magic School AI and Fluenzo are also tools useful for teachers.

We can create quizzes with the help of AI, flashcards to be used, and formative assessments using AI. We can make use of Khanmigo from Khan Academy, which is a wonderful tool in personalizing students' support. We can deliver math lessons and concepts in a differentiated manner. We can use Synthesia and ElevenLabs, which are very good tools to create videos and useful content. Often, we are not able to take the students on any field trip due to various reasons, and in such cases, the AI-generated videos can give the feeling of being on a field trip and understand things better. We can create videos and engaging content. All these things are possible only when we re-roll ourselves, do training and courses. We can stay updated when we attend workshops. Coursera and Microsoft AI for Educators are excellent tools for teachers to do the training and learn to use AI for their benefit. We can join AI education communities on LinkedIn or Twitter, etc. We will know about the ethical use of AI, biases, and responsible usage, and teach the same to students.

Read the full length article on SchoolReformer.com Blog.

Contact:
Monica Khanna
IB-PYP Coordinator II, Curriculum Coordinator-K12 II, Design thinking practitioner
Indus International School, Bangalore

Ganesh Srinivasan

Learning made fun and easy

Ganesh Srinivasan, an educator and motivational speaker, explains the students' struggle to adapt when learning takes them beyond their comfort zones.

Edutainment integrates engaging methods, simplifies complex subjects, and enhances retention. Many subjects, often seen as difficult, become more approachable when taught through interactive and enjoyable techniques.

At this age, when someone comes and tells you to move out of your comfort zone of teaching, you get angry. But if you dare to overcome the rage at this age, then the whole world could encourage you. Dr. Kolbe and his team conducted research for the United Nations over 20 years, spanning more than 70 countries, in an effort to define what constitutes a child. They concluded by describing a Child as a learner. If a child is a learner, then why make learning difficult? According to you all, which is the most difficult subject for the majority of students? Maths. Why? English 26 variables, maths 10 variables, logically should be 300% easier than English. No grammar like nouns, adjectives, adverbs, past tense, present tense, participles, prepositions, etc. No pronunciation problems, no grammar like tenses, nouns, adverbs, conjunctions, interjections, prepositions, etc, and one letter silent, etc. Then why is Maths difficult? Because it was not taught in an edutainment way. So, how to make all subjects easy and interesting

We all love anything entertaining, from books to shows. That is why students love it when education is entertaining. Edutainment caters to all 4 styles of learning. Edutainment merges education and entertainment to make learning fun and effective. It uses tools like games, videos, and virtual reality to engage students and improve retention. Edutainment is transforming education, making subjects more interesting and enhancing personalized learning experiences.

Edutainment has its roots in the 1950s, when the Walt Disney Company started producing educational content for children. The company used animation and storytelling to teach lessons about science, history, and culture. The term "edutainment" was coined in the 1970s, when educators and researchers began to explore the concept of using entertainment to enhance learning. However, the introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education has been a great boost for this methodology. Learning does not follow a linear pathway. This was the concept of our early Gurukula system of education.

Many children are accessing the Internet at younger ages. Some preschoolers are introduced to Internet-enabled devices before books. Children are engaging online for entertainment, communication, and learning. Edutainment techniques like

gamification, storytelling, Augmented Reality (AR), and Virtual Reality (VR) can create immersive learning experiences that help students explore and interact with real-world environments.

AR and VR can help students collaborate in virtual settings, which can foster creative thinking and teamwork.

AR and VR can help students practice techniques and procedures without the risk of errors in real-life situations.

Educational games, especially in subjects like mathematics, language learning, and coding, are transforming traditional education by making complex subjects accessible, enjoyable, and aligned with digital age skills. Edutainment, "education" and "entertainment," the term itself was coined in the 1970s by Robert Heyman during his work with the National Geographic Society, the idea of making learning enjoyable. The advent of educational technology, multimedia, and interactive gaming has created dynamic learning environments that were once unimaginable. This evolution has not only made learning more enjoyable but has also opened up new possibilities for personalized, immersive educational experiences that cater to diverse learning styles and needs.

By presenting educational content in an entertaining format, learners are naturally drawn to participate more actively in the learning process. This increased engagement leads to improved concentration and a remarkable enhancement in the retention of information. When students are having fun, they are more likely to stay focused and absorb knowledge effortlessly, making the learning experience both enjoyable and effective.

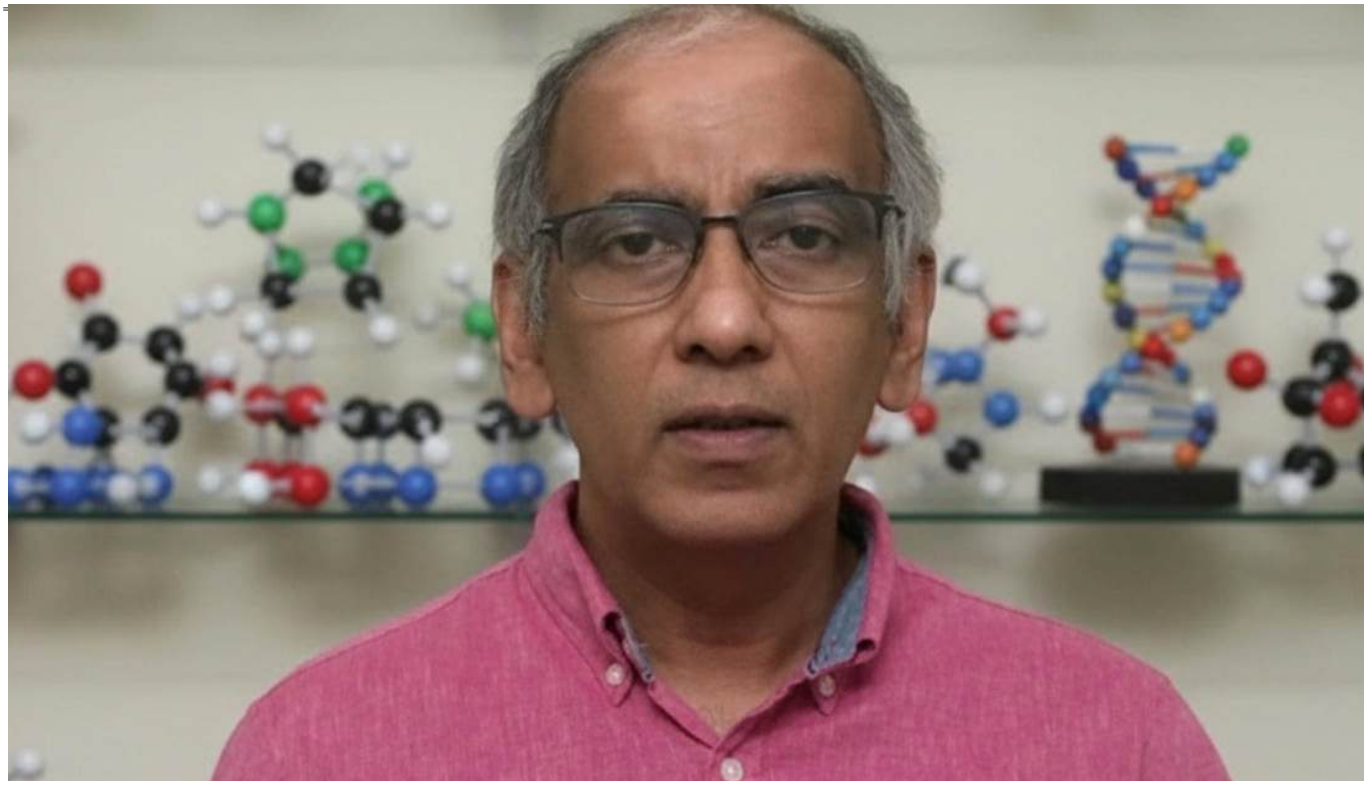
By presenting information in novel and exciting ways, edutainment encourages learners to think outside the box. It helps students to quickly adapt to new situations and think on their feet, which is an invaluable skill in our rapidly changing world. Edutainment prepares students for future challenges both in their academic journey and beyond. Perhaps one of the most significant advantages of edutainment is its ability to facilitate personalized learning journeys. The impact of this approach is tangible; AI-predicted educational outcomes using edutainment techniques have saved over 3 million students from failing by identifying at-risk students early and providing tailored support. This remarkable statistic underscores the power of edutainment in not just making learning fun but in fundamentally transforming educational outcomes. Three popular methods are noteworthy: gamification, storytelling, and the deployment of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). Each of these techniques brings unique elements to the learning process, fostering engagement, motivation, and immersive experiences.

Stories, games, and knowledge

Gamification has emerged as a powerful edutainment tool, revolutionizing the educational landscape by integrating game-like elements into learning experiences. This technique taps into the innate human desire for competition, achievement, and reward, making the learning process more engaging and motivating. Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies have introduced a new era of immersive learning experiences, radically changing how we engage with educational content. These cutting-edge tools create captivating, three-dimensional environments that allow learners to explore, experiment, and engage with subject matter in ways that were previously impossible.

Read the full length article on SchoolReformer.com Blog.

Contact:
Ganesh Srinivasan
Interested in education
Sringeri
M: 89211 36675
E: vu3gen@gmail.com



Dharmendra Dubay

Discover by doing

Dharmendra Dubay, from Trinidad and Tobago, currently working in Canadian International School, Bangalore, explains that constructivism is a way of teaching that helps students learn by doing, discussing, and discovering ideas on their own.

Lessons should connect with what students like and are good at, while teachers, with clear plans, activities, and support, guide them when needed. This way, students share ideas, learn from their mistakes, and gain a deeper understanding of the topics.

The term constructivism has been widely discussed in education and is closely linked to several renowned educationists, particularly John Dewey. Dewey was the one who first proposed that students should be allowed to understand and figure out things on their own, rather than just memorizing content. He emphasized that learning is more effective when traditional subject matter is integrated with the student's strengths, prior experiences, and interests. This idea remains extremely relevant today, as educators search for ways to make learning meaningful and engaging.

In this approach, the teacher's role is not to deliver lessons as a one-way transfer of knowledge but to guide students according to their needs. I often call this guidance metacognitive scaffolding. The term metacognition was introduced into education by John Flavell, and in simple terms, it means "thinking about thinking." It is about helping students reflect on their own thought processes, understand how they learn, and make decisions to improve their learning outcomes.

Constructivism emphasises that students are active participants in learning. They do not come to the classroom as empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. Instead, they bring ideas, questions, and prior experiences that shape the way they understand new concepts. Teachers facilitate learning by providing guidance, encouraging discussion, and supporting exploration, which allows students to construct knowledge meaningfully. This has significant implications for lesson planning, classroom interactions, and assessment strategies.

When learners are given a task, the conversations they have among themselves are often as insightful as the final product. Many times, if we pay close attention, we can see how students are reasoning, questioning, and negotiating solutions. For instance, a group working on a chemistry model might say, "I think the bond angle should be different" or "Maybe if we rotate this part, it will fit better." These small discussions show that students are actively thinking, testing ideas, and reflecting on their learning.

Mistakes are an integral part of this process. When students en-

counter errors, they rarely stop there. Instead, they discuss, analyse, and try new approaches. As teachers, we may feel the urge to intervene immediately, but sometimes the best support is simply observing and letting them work through challenges on their own. This approach helps students develop resilience, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Over the years, I have noticed that students who are initially hesitant often become more confident through these conversations. One quiet student in my class, for example, surprised everyone by suggesting a creative modification to a molecular model. Moments like these highlight how constructivist learning allows hidden talents to surface and encourages every student to contribute to collective understanding.

For constructivist approaches to succeed, careful lesson planning is essential. Activities must be designed to encourage students to discuss, analyse, and identify key features of a concept. Students also need preparation and prior knowledge before they engage in the task. Simply handing them a science kit or a set of instructions rarely works. Without understanding the why behind an activity, students may follow steps mechanically but fail to engage with the concepts. Planning is not just about content coverage; it also involves deciding on timing, prompts, and the type of support to provide. Many activities may extend over several days, requiring ongoing guidance. For instance, during a multi-day chemistry activity, I realised that students needed regular checkpoints to stay on track. Without these, discussions sometimes wandered, or students became unsure about the next step. By planning and anticipating possible difficulties, teachers can provide support just when it is needed, without taking away the students' opportunity to explore.

Science is particularly suited to metacognitive scaffolding because it is hands-on, inquiry-driven, and conceptually rich. Researchers such as Mills have explored how to incorporate scaffolding effectively, although many educators were practising similar strategies long before it was formalised. Mills et al. provided an excellent example. Students were required to create a stop-motion animation illustrating how the Earth, once a single landmass, broke into plates that slowly drift apart. This did not require advanced technology; students used photocopies of images, cut them into shapes representing plates, and gradually moved them to simulate tectonic shifts. If devices like phones and tablets are available, then they can make this into a digital format with voiceover and annotations. Through this exercise, students discovered that tectonic plates do not move rapidly; they shift slowly because they float on molten material. My role was not to provide the answers but to ask questions like, "What happens if these plates collide?" or "How does this movement affect the surrounding land?" By prompting reflection, I allowed students to refine their animations independently. They learned not only the scientific concept but also patience, attention to detail, and analytical thinking. Many students later commented that creating the animation helped them "see" the Earth's movements in a way diagrams could never convey. These reflections reinforced the value of constructivist approaches, showing that learning is deeper when students are actively involved.

Read the full length article on SchoolReformer.com Blog.

Contact:
Dharmendra Dubay
Secondary Science Teacher, Canadian International School, Bangalore
M: 7349252651
E: dubaysaspx@gmail.com

Rafsal Muhammed

Education that endures

Rafsal Muhammed, humanities teacher, explains why today's students need more than just textbook learning to succeed.

Beyond textbook engagement is essential for 21st-century learners, as they can learn more by using interactive methods. The 21st-century learners are entering a phase where not only education but every sector is developing or growing very fast. Be it economics, industries, technology, or media, everything is evolving rapidly. So, education is also not an exception, as it is rapidly changing and undergoing transformation. We as teachers have to remember that just focusing on traditional textbook-based learning alone is not enough or sufficient to engage the 21st-century learners. We have to bear in mind that the whole world is changing rapidly and is being driven by technology, creativity, and we need to remember that the students will be facing real-world problems, and it is essential that they know how to solve them. So, today's learners should know a dynamic interactive method that caters to their diverse learning styles. We have to encourage their critical thinking and faster collaboration. These two are the main 21st-century skills that students are always expected to have. Many of the world's famous companies or MNCs, like Google or Microsoft, do not focus on the university or school where the students have studied. But they want to know if the students are capable of solving an issue, a real-world problem, and the solution for it. Problems are found everywhere, and so companies and institutions always look for problem solvers. In this way, the 21st-century learners need a different treatment. We, teachers, should bear in mind that learners are everything, and they are the centre of all our actions. This is very important when it comes to teaching and learning. Textbook learning is something we have been following for centuries and decades. Our learning should move beyond the textbooks because learning styles are changing. Today's students are different from the students of yesteryear. They are digital natives, collecting and processing information in different ways. They focus mainly on processing information, ideas, and concepts in visual methods or hands-on activities, or using technology-driven content. There will be conflicts, such as textbooks versus gadgets. Keeping in mind that learners are the centres of everything, we have to focus on their learning style, which is very important. We have to change our method of delivering content to the students, which will help change the learning style. That is why we have to move beyond the textbooks.

Secondly, real-world relevance makes the teachers question whether the textbooks traditionally followed are enough to solve today's problems. Students are more connected with real-life experience. For example, when we teach poverty or population, or pollution, the students should be able to connect with real life by connecting with real-life experiences. For example, when we teach about pollution, we can take the example of Delhi pollution. If we are teaching about the impact of high population, we can take the cities as examples where the population is increasing every year, and the possible outcomes and issues that may arise because of this.

Thirdly, we have to work on encouraging higher-order thinking instead of memorization. Earlier, teachers were focusing on whether the students wrote exactly what was given in the textbook, but today, open text-

book exams are very common, where the examiner is looking into the higher-order thinking of the students. Even if the students open the textbook, it is very difficult to answer the question because it requires higher-order thinking. To achieve higher-order thinking, students have to develop skills like creativity, analysis, and problem-solving. The 21st-century skills are completely different, and memorization is not needed anymore. The students need not memorise the facts as it is not needed for 21st-century learning. But the students have to develop problem-solving skills and creativity to succeed in their academics.

The effective interactive learning strategies are the main solutions to solve the problems of the students. I have been following the strategies in my school with my students, and I have achieved great results. The students get a lot of encouragement, appreciation, and they are completely engaged in the work they do. For an interactive method of teaching, we can try project-based learning, or PBL. It is one of the most important methods compared to teaching from a textbook. For example, if we give a sustainability project to the students after teaching them what sustainability is, we need to help them connect with the school. They can compare how the society around them, the real-life situations around them, are connected to sustainability. In my school, we had a unit called sustainable energy sources. After discussing what it means, the importance, and the significance of sustainability, I gave them an activity. The students visited the main departments in the school, such as the transport department, and identified what are the sustainable practices they can implement in transportation, discussed with the authorities in the school, and they also suggested things that could be implemented in transportation. Similarly, they visited the school kitchen and suggested practices that could make the dining area more sustainable. They visited the school farm and worked on how they can make use of solar panels, etc. We can take them to places and explain how they can collect materials related to their topics.

PBL encourages students to explore real-life problems. The students will get more insights. Next comes gamification in education. We can use Kahoot, an educational app, to explain the concept or content. We can completely transform the summative or formative learning in gamification. The students will be engaged in learning more through this. Technology integration is another important aspect. Everything is connected to technology now. When we teach, for example, about the Indus Valley Civilisation, which is located in Pakistan, it is difficult for us to go there and see it. But we can have a virtual reality tour, which is available on the internet. We can integrate technology into education and thus use interactive methods in education.

Collaborative learning is equally important. We can conduct group discussions or peer teaching interactive debates to promote teamwork and communication skills. The students have to research a given topic, interact with each other, and we can include peer teaching by asking one of the students to take the role of a teacher for a day, which they will do happily. Experiential learning, which can be achieved by field visits, brings subjects to life. We took our students to Kutub Shahi in Hyderabad so that they could explore the details. It is not just visiting a park, but we can plan some short learning trips. We can ask students to represent different nations in the United Nations model, and they can present the problems faced by each country.

There are a few challenges that teachers face. They have very limited resources. But they can make use of the resources available on the internet. They can use Google Classroom or ClassDojo. They can also use Canva, Padlet, Grammarly, and Google Scholar. We can use Cohort Google Forms, and these are the technologies available to us. We have to make use of them to the fullest potential. The learning needs of 21st-century students are totally different, and it is a challenge for teachers. They need professional development and training.

Read the full length article on SchoolReformer.com Blog.

Contact:
Rafsal Muhammed
MYP Individuals and Societies and History Facilitator
E:rafsalckd@gmail.com
M:919745499863

When teachers stop reading, students stop learning

This research argues that the reading habits of teachers are a decisive factor in shaping students' literacy outcomes. Drawing on a 2022 study, it highlights how poor teacher reading practices weaken classroom instruction, while committed, curious teachers foster lifelong readers. For headmasters, the message is urgent: unless schools create a reading culture for teachers, they cannot hope to nurture one in their students.

LITERACY BEYOND EXAMS

In every school, the question of literacy goes beyond preparing students for examinations. Literacy is the foundation of learning, a tool for engaging with the wider world, and a skill that shapes future success. Yet, in many countries—including India and Indonesia—student literacy levels remain worryingly low.

International assessments such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) repeatedly show Asian countries like Singapore and China excelling, while large systems like Indonesia and India lag behind. This gap cannot be explained away only by resources or socio-economic differences. The heart of the problem lies within the school itself—specifically, in the habits and practices of teachers. If teachers themselves do not read widely, critically, and with joy, how can they cultivate literacy in their students?

What the Indonesian Study Reveals

A significant study published in the English Review: Journal of English Education in 2022 by Hesni Neno, Ulu Emanuel, and Delti Yulita investigated the reading habits of English teachers in Indonesia and their effect on students' literacy. The researchers surveyed six teachers and 120 students across six schools using questionnaires, interviews, and reading tests.

The findings were sobering. Teachers' reading habits were weak; most spent only one to two hours a day reading, and often only for entertainment rather than professional or intellectual growth. Few read more than five books a week, and none had published any writing. Their attitudes toward reading were mixed: many admitted they found reading in English frustrating and time-consuming, and their motivation to read was largely external, tied to their job, rather than internal, linked to a love of learning.

WEAK HABITS, WEAK OUTCOMES

Unsurprisingly, students performed poorly on reading tests, scoring an average of 59 percent. Their struggles reflected both weak vocabulary and poor comprehension strategies. Teachers also relied heavily on traditional practices, equating reading with translation rather than engaging critically with ideas.

The conclusion was clear: when teachers themselves lack strong reading habits, students receive limited guidance, poor modeling, and little motivation to become readers. As educationists have long argued, teachers are role models not only in conduct but also in intellectual habits.

The Role of Attitudes and Motivation

The study also highlights the importance of affective states such as motivation, persistence, and self-belief. For teachers, this means asking: Why do I read? Do I see reading as struggle or as discovery? Do I persist with difficult texts? When teachers' attitudes are negative, students quickly adopt the same mindset. A classroom where both teacher and student see reading as mere word-for-word translation cannot produce critical thinkers.

Technology: Help or Hindrance?

Technology complicates this picture further. Teachers in the study admitted they now read mostly online texts—short articles, entertainment pieces, and social media updates. Students too spend hours on screens, but often consuming videos and games rather than reading deeply.

Yet the internet also offers limitless opportunities: articles, research, and global perspectives. The problem is not access but guidance. Without teachers who themselves navigate digital reading wisely, students will drift toward shallow consumption instead of meaningful engagement.

BUILDING A READING CULTURE IN SCHOOLS

For school headmasters, the implications are urgent. It is not enough to introduce library periods or urge students to read. Unless teachers themselves are supported and encouraged to be readers, such initiatives will fail. Schools must deliberately create a teacher reading culture.

This means book discussions among staff, professional development workshops linked with research and pedagogy, and access to journals and curated book lists. Teachers should be encouraged not just to read, but also to write, publish reflec-

tions, and share their learning with colleagues and students.

THE OVERLOOKED INDICATOR OF QUALITY

Headmasters often measure school quality through infrastructure, exam results, or co-curricular achievements.
But perhaps the most overlooked indicator is this: Do the teachers in my school read, and do they enjoy reading? If the answer is no, it is little surprise if students read reluctantly, perform poorly, and struggle later in higher studies.
Investing in teachers' reading habits is not a luxury but a necessity. For students to become lifelong learners, their teachers must first embody that role.

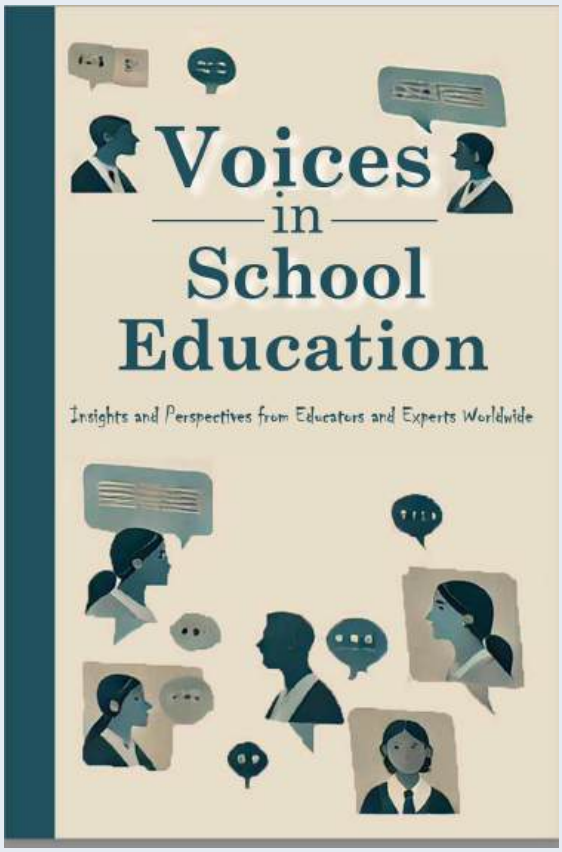
A MIRROR FOR INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA

The Indonesian study is a mirror for many schools in South Asia, including India. It confirms what we often sense: teachers who stop reading cannot nurture students who love reading. But it also offers hope. Habits can be changed. If schools deliberately cultivate teacher reading, provide resources, and integrate literacy into school life, students will slowly mirror that culture. The headmaster's role is pivotal: to set the tone, to insist that teachers remain learners, and to make reading central to professional identity. A school where teachers read is, without doubt, a school where students thrive.

Citation: Neno, H., Emanuel, U., & Yulita, D. (2022). Teachers' reading habits and their effect on the students' literacy. English Review: Journal of English Education, 10(3), 811–820. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v10i3.5705

Starting a teacher book club

A teacher book club is one of the simplest yet most powerful ways to build a culture of reading among staff. It strengthens professional knowledge, sparks creativity, and builds a sense of community. For teachers often overwhelmed by routine and administration, it offers arefreshing pause — a chance to step back, reflect, and engage with ideas beyond the syllabus.
The best way to start is small. Choose a short, accessible book, article, or essay connected to teaching or personal growth rather than heavy academic texts. The aim is to spark interest, not add pressure. Once a text is chosen, fix a regular meeting time — even 30 to 45 minutes once a month is enough. What matters most is consistency, because regular meetings signal that reading is valued in school life.
To keep discussions lively, rotate the role of discussion leader so everyone takes ownership. The focus should not be on "right answers" but on sharing reflections, personal takeaways, and classroom connections. This makes the club a space for discovery and exchange rather than another duty.
Access is important. Schools should ensure every teacher has the reading material, whether through the library, photocopies, or digital links. When teachers suggest readings themselves, their involvement and sense of ownership deepen.
Celebrating participation helps build momentum. Schools can highlight insights from the club in staff meetings, newsletters, or on a "Book of the Month" board. Teachers might also bring a story or quote into their classrooms, showing students that reading is a living habit. When students see their teachers reading with enthusiasm, they are far more likely to follow.
As the club grows, it can broaden its scope to include biographies, children's literature, or fiction. Guest facilitators — such as an author, educationist, or even a parent who reads widely — can add fresh energy.
Over time, a teacher book club becomes more than a reading circle. It evolves into part of the school's identity: a symbol of curiosity, collaboration, and lifelong learning. It gives teachers new ideas for the classroom, strengthens collegiality, and models the joy of reading for students. A school that supports teacher reading invests not only in teachers but in the future of its students.



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Date of Publication - 5th October 2025

Volume No.20, Issue No.10, October 2025
No.of Pages 24 (English - Monthly)
Posted at Bangalore PSO, Mysore Road,
Bangalore - 560 026
on 9th or 15th of every month