

Future Higher Education

Pradnya Kakodkar

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The present fast-paced digital world is evolving rapidly; also, COVID-19 additionally catalyzed the digital evolution, accelerating the change by almost 7 times while wiping out the educational progress in children by 20 years. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, launched recently in India, was revised with a gap of 34 years. This was done to keep pace with the fourth Industrial revolution with an intent to revamp, re-energize and re-adjust the current educational reforms primarily. Some of the principles of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) (Fig. 1) and Education 4.0 are considered in NEP 2020. The current university curriculum is primarily seen as neither designed based on the job market nor able to keep pace with technological advancement (Education 4.0).

The present higher Education is back-laden, and it needs to align itself with the futuristic constructs. The key activities that will help us in bringing about the change are as follows:

- *University level to start planning for "Higher Education of the Future – 2050" with a vision to "unbundle the bundled."*

The present university curriculum, which was designed decades ago, does not suit Gen Z, nor is it compliant with the job market. It is time that the curriculum must be redesigned, taking inputs from the students, academicians, and the job industry, complementing the technological advances. The degrees offered today are bundled and referred to as macrocredentials. However, according to the nature of the present-age learners, technology, and the skill demand in the market, education needs to be unbundled and presented as microcredentials. Higher education of the future is about new skills, a fast pace, flexibility, and personalized. Therefore, the approach needed here is to come together, learn about the advances, and be flexible to mold, adapt, and plan for future education.

- *Training the trainers: Lifelong learning for the teachers through microcredentials*

The SDG-4 (Target 4.7) talks about lifelong learning. The trainers who are responsible teachers or guides to the students in higher educational institutions also need new learnings. Through microcredentials, one can learn short, frequent new skills. It is so essential to keep oneself updated. If there is a common platform that will provide information and learning tools to the teachers, it can be the biggest advantage. The microcredential courses and



SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Fig. 1: Sustainable Development Goal 4

Education and Research Consultant, Megapolis, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Corresponding Author: Pradnya Kakodkar, Education and Research Consultant, Pune, Maharashtra, India, Phone: +91 9881409089, e-mail: pradnya.kakodkar@gmail.com

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the learning avenues are scattered globally. A center of learning can act as a focal point; under its umbrella, all the choices can be provided for the learner to pick and choose and implement.

- *Promote the concept of personalized and flexible learning*

Today's learners belong to Gen Z. They have characteristics like being fast learners, technology is like the extension of their brain and fingers, they like to visualize more than read and write, and their attention span is small. It would be obsolete to make the entire cohort sit in a place and learn the same thing at the same pace and at the same time. Instead, the learner can be free to choose flexibility and decide the time and place where they want to do the learning. There is a need for a center of Learning which can help devise such learning applications for future learners.

- *Curriculum designing*

The curriculum should not be designed in silos. Refer to Figure 2. Within the framework set by the governing bodies, curricular modifications can be undertaken by including the opinion of the industry (where the student is going to get employed) and the student alumni (who has both the experience of the student life plus the market experience) who can give the best direction to the present scenario.

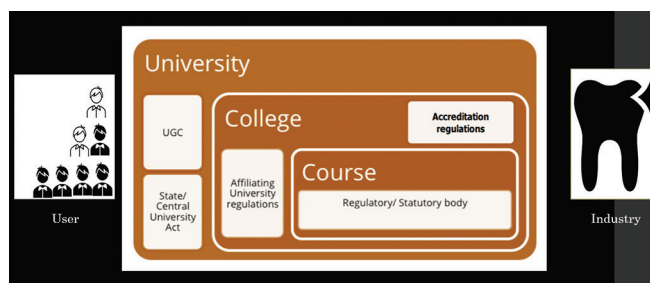


Fig. 2: Trinity for curriculum designing

- *Global citizenship education*

The SDG (Target 4.7) ensures that by 2030, all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. Digitalization is creating solitary humans or loners, which is in the exact reverse direction of the inherently social nature of "Humans." Today, we must teach our students and future generation the importance of humanity, justice, ethics, impartiality, and world peace. This can be done by including the concept of global citizenship education (GCED) in the curriculum, first for the teachers and then for the students.

- *Education for sustainable development*

Education for sustainable development (ESD) is a vision that gives students the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to become socially responsible global citizens and shape a sustainable future. ESD covers the three pillars of sustainability – environmental, social, and economic issues. United Nations 17 SDGs should act as a framework and ought to be included in the academic blueprint contributing to ESD. The pedagogy for ESD can be of the following types:

- *Critical reflection* – including the traditional lecture and newer approaches such as reflexive accounts, learning journals, and discussion groups.

- *Systemic thinking and analysis* – using real-world case studies and critical incidents, project-based learning, stimulus activities, and the campus as a learning resource.
- *Participatory learning* – with emphasis on group or peer learning, developing dialogue, experiential learning, action research/learning to act, and developing case studies with local community groups and business.
- *Thinking creatively for future scenarios* – using role play, real-world inquiry, futures visioning, problem-based learning, and providing space for emergence.
- *Collaborative learning* – including contributions from guest speakers, work-based learning, interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary working, and collaborative learning and coinquiry.

Finally, to sum up, we can approach the higher education of the future in the following ways:

- Forming a consortium by connecting with universities across India to lay policy guidelines for planning and designing a standard curriculum for future higher Education, including NEP2020, SDG-4, and Education 4.0.
- Planning and creating a center of training for lifelong learning.
- Creating awareness about Education 4.0 tools, implementing Education 4.0 complaint curriculum, and making technological applications available for flexible and personalized Learning.

Let us march ahead in education for a sustainable future!