

A CONCLAVE TO RETHINK CONVENTIONAL METHODS OF SCHOOLING & EDUCATION

Core principles of schooling and new ideas were discussed at **Rethinking Education Conclave**, presented by Aakash Educational Services Limited and The Newtown School, Calcutta, at Taj Bengal on September 7.

The panel featured bestselling writer Durjoy Datta, designer of outdoor-based learning programmes Gaurav Saklani, and educational technology solutions expert Nitin Balyan. The panellists touched upon issues that need to be kept in mind while formulating school curriculums, and the urgent need for two-way conversations between students and teachers.

“Today’s purpose was to introspect and collaborate on the possibilities of education because, as educators, we have the responsibility of preparing our students for the learning opportunities of tomorrow. We have no room for complacency since we need to be dynamic with our learning and provide better experiences both in class and outside,” said Satabdi G. Bhattacharjee, the principal of The Newtown School.



Gaurav Saklani on the importance of experiential learning

- Experience is the biggest teacher, so learning isn't restricted to classrooms. It happens outside students' comfort zones.
- Experiential learning operates on Confucius' principal — I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.
- Memory is a test for what can be considered a truly enriching experience.
- The Gurukul system advocated this form of learning but increasing population and stipulated time periods resulted in a drop in teaching efficiency in classrooms.
- Learning outdoors adds to exploring life skills and boosting esteem and adaptability along with academic subjects. The adventure and uncertainty adds to the level of engagement.
- Corporates too can effectively leverage experiential learning indulging in a group activity, with hierarchies getting dissolved within 15-20 minutes of being outdoors.
- Collaborative learning, which is both educational and recreational, is the key to a wholesome experience.



Nitin Balyan on the importance of technology in education

- Design softwares can change teaching as we know it, as students can now work twice as faster.
- Just like the current generation is (Microsoft) Word and Excel savvy, the current students will be adept with design tools as they will be aggressively tapped by Silicon Valley, to be able to become their customers in the future.
- Six technologies that are changing the industry are — cloud computing, robotics, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, virtual reality, and Internet of Things.
- We are living in a world of machine-to-machine interaction and instant services.
- We need to equip students with necessary knowledge to suit today's service-led industry, which means breaking away from the 20th century curriculum.
- The technology cycle consists of early innovators, early adopters, majority adopters and then late laggards. We have to be the source of manpower who are more advanced and upgrade themselves every day.
- We need to integrate technologies like robotics and 3D printing in our curriculum to be on a par with developed countries.



Durjoy Datta on the importance of creative skills

- My role model was my father who hailed from IIT Delhi and it led me to believe that IIT was the only way of making it. Hence, diversity of role models is very important while growing up.
- I didn't consider writing a serious profession till I was a writer myself, since my school never facilitated a conversation between a young me and a writer. I didn't know what struggles writers faced, challenges they went through, education they had, or money they earned.
- Parents too need to be engaged in a conversation with people in creative pursuits to be able to encourage kids to be open towards taking them up.
- Asking a teenager what he wants to do in life leads him to make a strong distinction between careers such as medicine, banking, chartered accountancy and engineering, while straying away from writing, media, TV and movies, which are termed as passions.
- Run after your career and put effort in it. And if you have time left, spend it on your passion. I made sure I had enough degrees before getting into writing full-time, so that if writing didn't work out for me, I could easily get a job.
- You could be a writer or an engineer, where both careers have dull and exciting days. The line between passion and profession needs to be blurred, so that even the more conventional professions do not appear as boring.
- You are not defined by things you are average at; you are defined by things you are best at.
- Schools need to make sure that kids are taken away from their screens and pushed into avenues that they'd normally not pursue.

Text: Vedant Karia
Pictures: Pabitra Das