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Cover Story

Towards Sustainable Education



High cost, low employability, & credential inflation plague education. While AI offers personalization, the focus must shift to Gandhi's self-sustenance model.

"A Saudi Arabian group is establishing schools in rural India. They were building some schools in Bihar, Kolkata, and other places. They were planning to invest Rs 3 crore to start a school. I suggested it would be better if they built a digital infrastructure. With this, they can bring expertise from outside rather than training local people," according to PK Shihabudeen, entrepreneur and co-founder of Hash Future School.

With technology making inroads into education, it is time for policymakers, institution builders,

and all stakeholders to devise strategies to make education sustainable.

Whether it is in the USA, Canada, Europe, or Asia, the key concern now is making education relevant and meaningful for learners. In America, graduates account for 30% of the unemployed and have increased by 10% in the past fifteen years.

In India, too, concerns exist about the lack of skills and employability among graduates across all streams. The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has launched a new initiative aimed at enhancing the employability of engineering students. They have identified 1000 under-engineering colleges in tier-2 and tier-3 cities for implementing pedagogical changes. The initiative is named "Project for Advancing Critical Thinking Industry Connect and Employability". The effort is to benefit five lakh undergraduate students and 10,000 faculty members.

"Despite having one of the largest networks of engineering colleges in the world, only about half of our graduates are considered employable in the modern industry. We will fill this employability gap by connecting colleges to industries, training teachers and improving pedagogy under PRACTICE initiativePRACTICE will redefine project-based learning and strengthen industry-academia collaboration, particularly in aspirational colleges with untapped potential," according to Dr TG Sitharam, Chairman, AICTE

In many universities, professors find it difficult when students submit AI content for assignments. Professors are now rethinking not just assignments, but also bringing a transformation in pedagogy. Harvard University instructors now face a delicate balancing act: integrate AI in ways that enhance learning, while safeguarding academic integrity and critical thinking

The positives in favour of AI are that it offers a transformative shift for education, requiring a digital focus over old systems. This enables personalisation, reduces study time, and fosters co-creation for AI natives.

Death of Human Capital?

Five years ago, Phillip Brown, Hugh Lauder, and Sin Yi Cheung stated in their book, **The Death of Human Capital**, that education was not helping learners earn a livelihood. "In encouraging people to invest in themselves, human capital policies have fueled credential inflation rather than extended individual opportunity. These inflationary pressures diminish the value of individual and public investments when there is a significant mismatch between the requirements to do a job and the requirements to get a job," the authors pointed out in the book.

According to them, credential inflation creates a mirage of opportunity in much the same way that financial inflation makes it seem as if people have more money. The authors have argued that the human capital story is one of a failed revolution. Therefore, an alternative approach to education, jobs, and income inequalities.

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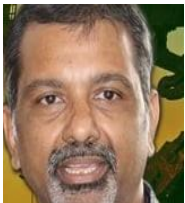
creation for AI-native users.

Gandhi's New Education

Mahatma Gandhi viewed education be self-sustaining and free. He said children could work on the spinning wheels in schools to earn while they learn. "It is admitted that the so-called knowledge of the three 'R's that is at present given in Government schools is of little use to the boys and girls in afterlife." His idea of having a spinning wheel was connected to the situation prevailing in the country during the pre-Independence days, as self-reliance had to be promoted and foreign goods banned. Gandhi believed that education should develop the head, heart, and hands. Spiritual training was also to be imparted to children.

He firmly believed that education not connected with the surroundings is not purposeful. Vocational training provided in schools could be self-supporting. They also learn to read, write, and do arithmetic. "Real education has to draw out the best from the boys and girls to be educated. This can never be done by packing ill-assorted and unwanted information into the heads of pupils. It becomes a deadweight crushing originality in them and turning them into mere automata."

 **Sreekumar Raghavan**



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