

The case for metaverse in next-gen education in India



Abhishek Arora 22 Aug, 2022



From the discovery of fire to the use of the plough, invention of writing, production of books, miracle of electricity, power of the steam engine, advent of computers, evolution of the internet and the digital world, technology has changed dramatically the way we have lived, and altered our experience of life itself! At each step in this journey, we had no means of knowing, upfront, how deeply or pervasively each of these tools, techniques, and practices would affect us; but, it did – profoundly and irreversibly!

Today, we live in a digital world, surrounded and inundated by the effects of the digital revolution that began on April 30th 1993 - the day the World Wide Web was officially announced. Little did we know then that we were stepping into a digital space that held enormous possibilities for the human species. In the last three decades or so, technology has reimagined our world as cyberspace, AI, ML, VR and cryptocurrency, and now with web 3.0, it is poised to conjure the Metaverse, a human experience of a virtual universe transcending the boundaries of time and space.

Arthur C Clarke, the prophetic science fiction writer, wrote “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic”. The Metaverse promises to be magical. Many of the tools and technologies that will make the Metaverse happen are already there in some form or the other, many more are being invented. Big tech companies, big retailers, fashion giants, sports companies, art galleries, are slowly but steadily aligning their vision and capital towards this dream. It is true that we are still years away from the democratization of the metaverse, but the journey is surely on, and at the current rate of progress and innovation, we shall perhaps be witness to its fruition during our lifetimes.

Why do we need Metaverse in education?

The metaverse's uses and applications are numerous and cannot be defined by any boundary as we know it today with the introduction of web 3.0. An unparalleled immersive learning experience which can make digital interactions feel more immersive - a medium that enables learners to engage and participate fully in a digitized classroom setting to solve abstract problems. Interaction between an instructor and learner occurs in an engaging and interactive environment, with all activities occurring in real time, hence allowing more empathy and stickiness.

To begin with, the metaverse provides immersive experiences that are completely effortless. It can improve the chances of combining multiple subjects in a single learning environment, resulting in more holistic learning experiences. Also, its emphasis on teamwork and finishing tasks in the virtual world can make learning seem like a video game, with lessons designed like quests to encourage learners to complete their work. This can make the process in totality, very interesting.

Additionally, VR-based teaching has the ability to dissolve disciplinary boundaries and show how various theories can be applied to actual situations. This promotes interdisciplinary learning and encourages practical application of theory. Also true is the fact that using the metaverse, education can also be made more liberal, and learners can create and share their own experiences, as well as design learning experiences that increase freedom and flexibility in learning.

Despite the many advantages of Metaverse, it is also true that not everyone would be able to adapt to the idea of using it in education because it lacks human interaction and can be addictive and isolating. However, experts believe that, as long as the metaverse adheres to the best principles for learning, it has the potential to transform how lessons are taught and learnt.

Indeed, metaverse is the next step in the evolution of technology-enabled education, allowing for a more engaging learning experience. It is the virtual, collaborative, and task-oriented nature of the metaverse that allows students to learn without even realizing it while also making it enjoyable for them.