Teaching in the Tech-zone

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Education has been undergoing a profound metamorphosis. Technology has become a great disruptor in the sphere of education with classrooms turning into great adaptors of various tech trends and models, writes Pradeep Narayanan, Head – Mind Champion Learning Systems Ltd. (MLSL), NIIT Ltd.

Gone are the days of the blackboards that were dusty and screechy. They have gradually been replaced by smart boards. Books and notebooks have to some extent found kindles, tablets or ipads taking over their presence too. Meticulous and colourful lesson plans and monthly planners now don't find any place in notebooks or files. School portals have become the one point stop for all the information and

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communication, making the almanacs a thing of the past. Teachers who are embracing and adapting to these changes and new classroom styles are enhancing their old methods of teaching with the use of growing technology.

Lessons that spanned into reading texts and listening to their explanations over a series of classes can now be disseminated to the students using virtual reality in barely ten minutes. It has been observed that visual streaming of content along with classroom discussions does have a better impact and recall value on students. This, as compared to pure visual display of content where the interest loss is more, has found acceptance both amongst teachers and students. Also, in the traditional teaching method, education material was restricted to the classroom. But with new technology and apps, they have the freedom and choice to access the learning material and engage with their teachers from the comforts of their homes. This model of education can provide some assistance in the education sector where the demand far outstrips the supply of trained teachers.

Struggle for Solutions

The education system is facing a new challenge with every passing year to provide better education to more of the growing populace. And technology is proving to be a great disruptor by helping in this mission with newer tools and aids becoming a part of teaching and curriculum. A hybrid form of teaching and learning known as blended learning that involves both online as well as classroom learning, is becoming the norm.

With the online education industry projected to be at $1.96 billion industry by 2021, as per a research conducted by KPMG along with Google search insights, blended learning is writing new chapters in the education system in the country. The research also indicated that the paid user base would grow 6X from 1.6 million users in 2016 to 9.6 million users in 2021, presenting a unique opportunity and market that can be explored. Technology is being used as a backbone by schools and teachers to encompass all the possible components required to service the present and future learning needs of schools.

A healthy combination of technology and traditional instructions has seen resounding success in classrooms across the globe. UNESCO estimates that India alone would need three million new teachers by 2030. To cater to such escalating demand, use of instruction models that make use of technology to become independent of certified teachers, is becoming the norm.

Scientific data has proven the success of blended learning making it the most acceptable and compatible model in the education domain. With every student learning at different paces, possess varied background knowledge and have varying memory capacities when they become part of a learning environment, blended learning allows them to alter their adaptability. Even for the educators, blended learning opens new vistas of growth, with teachers focusing more on delivery of targeted instructions.

Blend the trend

Though the traditional mode of face-to-face learning that has deep rooted traditions in the country cannot be replaced completely by technology, it has become pertinent to add on to the old techniques to bridge the gap between the students' skills and the demands from the industry. Additionally, educators or teachers get a respite from the mundane task of providing education through information overload but cater to individual interests and pace of learning along with monitoring the pace of success and learning. Such a system of education has elevated the teachers to a bigger role of mentors for their students. In return, the students too have an access to globally developed and industry relevant courses, adding on to their skills and giving them a higher rate of success of finding the right vocation.

While technology in education (ed-tech) may have crossed age-old barriers and opened new vistas for the future, the role of teachers and educators still holds an important key to the future of students. Several future technologies singularly or collectively may be able to do a better job than humans but that time has not come yet. While technology has and will be further aiding the educators to do a better job, the future definitely should have the teachers as the central agents being assisted with technology rather than putting ed-tech in the driver's seat.

The teachers will be needed to scrutinise, organise and plan which technology suits bets for their students needs. With the students adopting the role of self learners, teachers in this tech enabled education environment have become more of a motivator and an instructional designer that must organise, design and plan in a manner so as to integrate technology most effectively in their classrooms. However, the bottom line is that technology in education needs to be used as a tool to assists teachers and educators and not replace them.