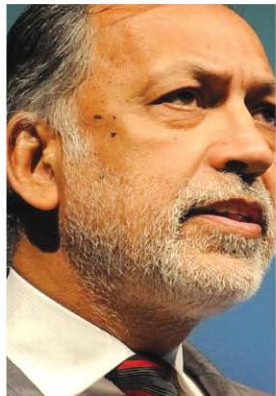


'The pandemic has accelerated digital transformation'

TE Raja Simhan Chennai | Updated on March 08, 2021



Jobs in software and IT, digital marketing, data and financial analysis will see a huge surge, says NIIT Group Chairman.

Rajendra Singh Pawar, Chairman, NIIT Group, has in the last three decades built NIIT into a leading global talent development corporation. He led NIIT's entry into the software and services market, creating NIIT Technologies, and followed it by starting NIIT University (NU) in Rajasthan in 2009 as a premier institution. The Covid-19 pandemic turned the world upside down, and the education sector was not spared either. In an interview with BusinessLine, Pawar discusses various issues in the education sector. Excerpts:

How has Covid-19 impacted the education sector, especially higher education?

The sudden spread of the virus has put everyone's lives on hold, students and working professionals alike. On one hand it put at risk every individual but on the other hand brought about exemplary agility in people and businesses to innovate. Many educationists

have stressed that higher education in the post-Covid world is bound to be IT-inclusive, with a special focus on distance learning. Online courses, online class discussions and inclusion of various IT elements in day-to-day life are becoming increasingly apparent.

How did NIIT University manage during the pandemic?

NU has inherited over three decades of technology expertise from its sponsoring organisation, NIIT Ltd, allowing it to quickly switch to a digital platform when educational institutions were asked to shut down. It embraced technology comprehensively, a seamless shift to an effective online learning model while students and teachers were at home. This made it possible for everyone to experience a campus-like feeling. This digital platform, specially created by NU and NIIT, has proved to be as effective as the classroom.

How do you see the New Education Policy helping the sector?

It promises students unheard of flexibility and freedom in the Indian context. Students can choose courses as per their liking, they can change if they feel like opting for different subjects, and even take a break.

How about digital skills?

Having a foundation in digital skills is essential for any profession today. The pandemic has accelerated digital transformation. No matter what your job role, you need to be well versed with digital methods and tools.

Which are the hot jobs for the future?

The pandemic has brought technology to the fore. Jobs in software and IT, digital marketing, data and financial analysis will see a huge surge. Every profession is becoming digital, and one needs to be well versed with digital methods and tools irrespective of their job roles. Whether one is a banker or a doctor, working in a digital environment, using digital practices, has become important. Covid-19 has increased the pace of learning and demand for advanced technical skills like cybersecurity and data science. According to Nasscom, the IT sector is the only sector which has added jobs.

How should the education sector respond to this change?

The education sector has to respond promptly to this new need and multi-disciplinary courses, coupled with robust internships and optional industry immersion programmes, will be the future.

What does the industry look for in young graduates?

The industry wants young ambitious students who have the know-how on how to get things done. We provide education that is industry-linked, technology-focused, research-driven and seamless. Our undergrads are often keen to get into research and start working on their projects along with Ph.D. students so that research skills are built from the very outset. In fact, over the years, we have been evolving and implementing our vision of industry-linked education to develop students who are able to tackle any problem that is thrown at them.