

# INDIA TODAY

## Technology vs experience: Here's why learning matters most between these two

*It is in this fusion of technology and experience that deeper learning will come alive for each and every child in its own unique way.*

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**'What is worth learning?'** or **'Learning that matters'** is a point of reflection for educators that has become more pertinent than ever before. In this time of new normal where all of us are stretching ourselves and our thinking to provide the best of learning experiences for our children, we often land up in a conundrum when it comes to choosing technology or experience.

While technology and virtual schooling is given in this phase of the pandemic, we often feel that the experiential aspect of learning is getting compromised. There is magic in authentic human connection that can't be replaced but there is a lot that can be felt, experienced, and sensed in the virtual world too!

We need to change our lens and have a sense of wonderment towards what this new space has to offer us. And, as we do this, the world of technology and experience can come together in ways that we might not have imagined before!



## Re-Imagining Learning Experiences

Being a strong proponent of experiential learning myself and seeing it as one of the foundational aspects of learning, it should be reflected in our curriculum and classrooms every day. The essential question that then arises is *'how do we ensure that this aspect of experiential learning doesn't get shrouded in virtual reality but is rather enhanced by it and brought to the forefront?'*

At the outset, it requires us to widen our understanding of what constitutes a great learning experience. Instead of viewing it as something that is provided to or done to a student, we need to see it as something that students engage with by themselves. This pushes us towards a completely different design challenge.

### Students as owners of their Learning

We are now thinking about designing learning experiences where learner's ownership and autonomy are paramount. Our learners are in a mode of learning where they are independent learners and virtual collaborators, both at the same time. A gift of this mode of learning is that we can now customise and differentiate learning experiences in a way we could never before.

While one child engages in viewing and listening to a story read aloud in an asynchronous setting, another child could be working on making her own story along with a group of peers and her educator; both working on understanding elements of a story as a part of their Literacy curriculum. In another situation, a group of children uses different kinds of pulses and grains in their house to count and quantify a number suggested by the educator while another group of children uses their journals to draw the number of objects for the given number. Both groups are working on numbers and quantification while using diverse ways of expression of their understanding.

In a middle or high school classroom, for instance, this translates into collaborating as well as working independently on projects and presenting findings on 'how stereotypes and role identities have changed over a period of time in India'.

This provides independent as well as collaborative research time to students and allows them to take ownership of their learning while still engaging in meaningful experiences and choosing a way of expression that works best for them.



Research has shown over and over again how students' agency accelerates their learning. The responsibility of educators in this new normal is to widen their lens and push themselves to design learning experiences that promote student agency through the powerful vehicle of technology.

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