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# New Skills Needed

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"I believe that the school must represent present life – life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground." *John Dewey*

## LUCUBRATE MAGAZINE

The world is changing all around us. A skilled population is the key to a country's sustainable development and stability. We know that obtaining a quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustainable development. To contribute to skill people over the next ten years and beyond, we must look ahead, understand the trends and forces that will shape our business in the future and move swiftly to prepare for what has to come. We must get ready for tomorrow today. We will make it possible for youth and young adults all over the world to gain skills they can use in the labour market or to create their own jobs. We will make it possible for every person to have lifelong learning opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their aspirations and contribute to their societies.

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## Quality is Still the Foremost Factor in the Provision of Online Education

*By Professor Nita Temmerman, Australia*

Technology has brought great advantages to the online teaching-learning environment. It has changed how we do teaching and learning and opened up the world of learning and opportunity to those who would not have had such opportunity without it.



Photo: Adobe Stock

However, for online education to be successful there has to be commitment and support by governments, institutions, academics and learners. An absolute necessity is providing quality education. That means well-resourced institutions, well qualified and motivated staff, good and continuous quality assurance mechanisms and supportive leadership.

### Challenges Associated with Online Education



Perhaps one of the biggest challenges associated with online education is assuring parents, employers and students that the quality of what learners receive is

#### **Professor Nita Temmerman**

Nita Temmerman (PhD; MEd (Hons); BEd; BMus; ATCL; MACE) has held senior University positions in Australia including Pro Vice Chancellor Academic Quality, Pro Vice Chancellor International Partnerships and Executive Dean. She is an independent higher education consultant and invited professor to universities in Australia, the Pacific region, SE Asia and the Middle East and Academic Board Chair for private higher education institutions. Nita is also an invited accreditation specialist with the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic & Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), and international associate with the Center for Learning Innovations & Customized Knowledge Solutions (Dubai). Projects draw on expertise in organisational strategic planning, quality assurance, academic accreditation and reaccreditation, higher education policy development and review, teacher education and curriculum design and evaluation. Nita has published 14 books, over 70 scholarly papers, conducted numerous presentations in SE Asia, Middle East, Pacific, UK and USA and remains an active contributor to several education publications.

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just as good as that delivered in face-to-face mode. That challenge of course, is often compounded by the quality of what is actually offered and the ad hoc nature in which online education companies have sprung up. What some of them are producing is very questionable and this affects more broadly how online learning is perceived. It has taken a major upheaval brought about by Covid 19 for many education institutions to adapt to the forced change to the teaching-learning environment and address the issue of quality in online offerings.

There are many stakeholders in the online learning environment. These include the institutions that offer online education, the staff who teach the courses, the students enrolled in online study, the parents paying their child's fees, the prospective employers of graduates from online courses, the Ministry/Government and the broader society. First & foremost all these stakeholders want the online courses to meet certain standards, be quality assured and accredited and so be recognised nationally & internationally. It means having in place a supportive governmental policy environment.

## Quality Assurance Mechanisms in Online Courses

Institutions that deliver online should have clearly spelt out quality assurance mechanisms in place for staff and students and make sure these are implemented. Staff who develop and deliver online must be appropriately qualified and supported professionally. Adequate resourcing and investment in technology that works must be available. Lastly and just as importantly, there must be a guarantee that learners have access to support right through their learning journey, from admission up to graduation. The key is to develop ways for online students to feel as if they belong, they are connected, they can develop relationships – even if they are virtual. To support this, instructors need to proactively engage with students, get to know them and maintain contact throughout their study, as well as incorporate methods to motivate and encourage them and foster student to student contact also. Unresponsive instructors are a significant factor in students not continuing with their online studies.

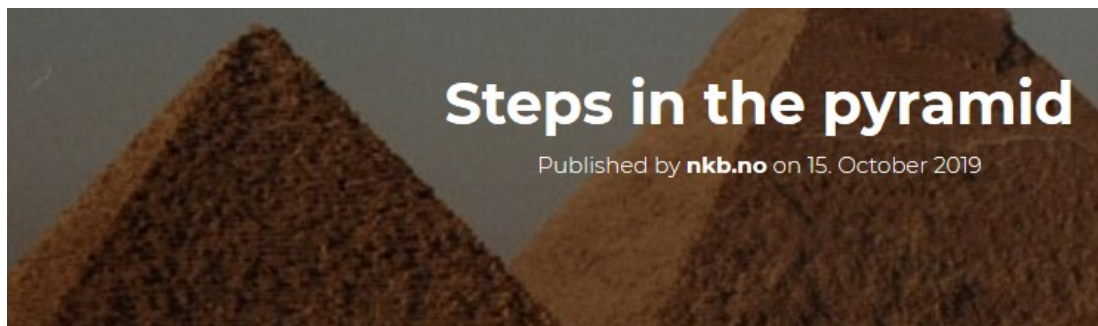
The whole process can be summed up as an interconnected support scheme. The students do the learning, the instructor provides the learning materials and supports the students' learning process, the higher education institution makes available the infrastructure and systems for the instructors delivering the courses to the students, and the Ministry authority/government that oversees the accreditation of academic programs provides an appropriate policy environment for all stakeholders engaged in online education.



## Online Courses Must be of an Equal Quality to that Delivered in Face-to-face Mode

There are literally thousands if not millions of students who have successfully studied and completed their qualifications online from certificate through to doctoral level. Enrolments in higher education continue to grow along with those in the online corporate market as more industries and businesses use online learning as a means of training for their employees. The access, convenience and flexibility online learning provides is a major factor in its growth. Regardless however, the key message is the same as in any learning environment, namely that what is delivered online must be of an equal quality to that delivered in face-to-face mode.

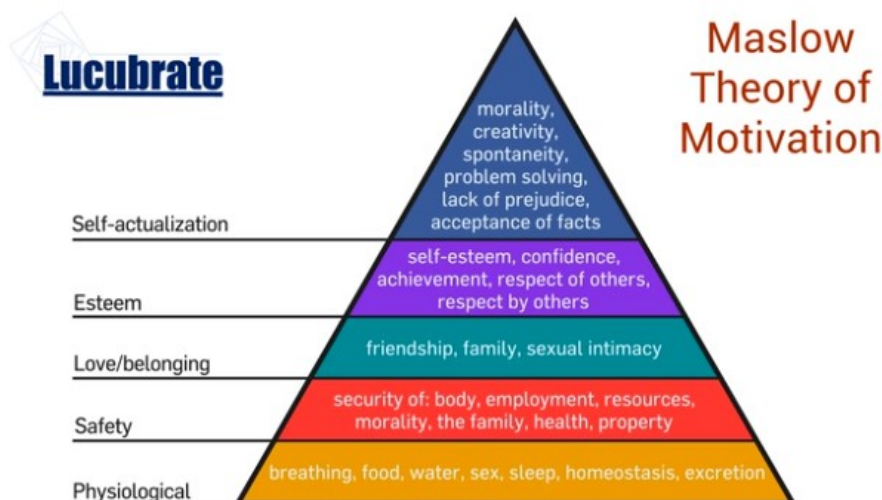
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## Happy Zone for Children and STEAM for Therapeutic Education

By George Panicker, India

In today's world, one can access almost everything online without disembarking from the comfort of their couch; this includes education. Sounds great for sure, but is it great for school teachers and students? What are the lessons learned so far, and what is the way forward?



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Education is a Human Right, and so is Right Education. We can never impart holistic education to children through remote schooling. The COVID 19 pandemic has forced technically challenged teachers to quickly adapt to technology and deliver lessons to their students online with the sole aim to cover the lessons of subjects within the time that was set before the pandemic. In fact, the time allocation had hardly changed over the years. Covering lessons and subjects in this manner has deprived the students of the opportunity of discovering. The crucial question is, have we started treating children's brains as storage space similar to how we use Cloud storage?

### Digital Divide, Digital Bulimia, and Digital Detox



**George Panicker**

George Panicker is an Entrepreneur, Author, Independent Documentary Film producer and a passionate Educationist. He is the Founder of International STEAM Research Pvt. Ltd.

The use of technology definitely has its advantages. However, its limitations and disadvantages should never be overlooked. Technology is great value addition

and must be used in schools by teachers as an augmenting tool within the classroom rather than only for remote teaching and allowing it to stifle holistic

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growth, including social and emotional growth. The onus lies with adults to facilitate children engaging with their peers and learning through critical thinking of interlinked concepts across subjects.

It is imperative to state that excessive use of technology, especially in remote learning, has not only created a large Digital Divide between the fortunate and the less fortunate but also created Digital Bulimia, especially among the children from economically well to do families, forcing many schools across the globe to introduce the idea of Digital Detox days.

Reality will bite once schools reopen as children will then have to get off the comfort of their couches at home and sit in physical classrooms through every subject period in a disciplined manner. This will be stressful for many children as they may not be able to make this quick shift, and teachers would find it stressful to manage numerous fidgety and impatient kids in the classroom. The danger of many children being wrongly diagnosed with ADHD looms large.



## Engage children in hands-on therapeutic education through integrated STEAM

The best way forward is to engage children in hands-on therapeutic education through integrated Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) activities with the use of futuristic technologies, which will help students gain crucial 21st Century Skills of Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication and Collaboration or the 4Cs as it is commonly known.

The benefits of such therapeutic interventions by schools will be multiple. It will transform schools into Happy Zone for children to remain curious, excited, and eager to spend quality time engaging in discovering rather than just covering their subject portions through rote learning. Teachers will become natural therapists if they engage as facilitators for their students in their inquiry-based explorations, discoveries, and innovations, which is the core of STEAM. Needless to state, students will develop as mindful and versatile global citizens.

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## I Work Hard Every Day Even I Can See That the Digital Economy Can Replace Me

By Karl Skaar, Norway

While the transition from subsistence agriculture to the consolidation of the industrial economy took over a century, the new digital communication technologies are accelerating the pace of all manner of change in the world of work, including growth in the service sector.



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My work has been the same for years. Some time back, I made a change and got a new employer. I thought I had the needed skills for different kind of jobs. However, who need the skills I got fifteen years back? Who needs an employee that is clever and has skills that the labour market needed years back?

The digital revolution encompasses various disruptive technologies, such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, the Internet of Things, e-business, blockchains and big data. Its pervasiveness has led to sweeping social, economic, and cultural change, including personal relations, leisure, consumption habits, production



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- Chairman of Board of Directors of Norsk Kompetansebygging AS, a Consultancy company, Norway

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systems, marketing, distribution, and labour. Technological innovation is transforming every part of our lives. The ability to quickly and cheaply exchange large amounts of data and information has laid the foundations for the rise of the digital economy and digital labour platforms. In both developed and developing countries, businesses and consumers have embraced this transformation, as services and goods are delivered in cheaper and more convenient ways. Digital labour platforms are now part of our everyday lives.

## The Digital Economy is Transforming the World of Work.

Digital transformation affects economies and societies in complex and interrelated ways, demanding more strategic approaches. Digital transformation affects my work. Not only my work. It affects my everyday life and every around me. The digital economy is based on digital computing technologies, the internet, and the World Wide Web. The digital economy also includes what we call Internet Economy, New Economy, or Web Economy.

The digital economy is transforming the world of work. The digital economy is challenging my job security. Over the past decade, the expansion in broadband connectivity and cloud computing, along with innovations in information and communications technologies, have enabled economic transactions and the exchange of large amounts of data and information between individuals, businesses and devices. Data is increasingly a key asset driving the digital economy. Related to these transformations is the proliferation of digital platforms in several sectors of the economy.

People regularly work from different offices, their home, or a local coffee shop – now even more so since the pandemic has pushed remote working to the fore. While our work has changed, we all expect the same level of connectivity experienced in the physical office. The emergence of this flexible, global enterprise requires organisations to manage a dynamic ecosystem of talent and enable next-generation digital business processes that prove effective, even when distributed across various places and time zones. [1]

Digital labour platforms are a distinctive part of the digital economy. They allow individuals or business clients to arrange a ride, order food or find a freelancer to develop a website or translate a document, among many other activities and assignments. By connecting businesses and clients to workers, they are transforming labour processes with major implications for the future of work. [2]

## The Digital Economy Over the Last Thirty Years

The pace at which technological advances and innovations are taking place is unprecedented. The information and communications technology (ICT) revolution of the early 1990s led to a rapid diffusion and adoption of the internet that transformed many economic sectors and reshaped regional, national and international markets. It led to a geographical fragmentation of industry as firms could subcontract, outsource and offshore through global supply chains at a relatively low cost. The expansion of broadband connectivity and high-speed internet availability enabled the rapid develop-

ment of digital infrastructure from the early 2000s. Widespread use of the internet and ICT devices by businesses and individuals paved the way for web transactions (on platforms such as Amazon and eBay) and laid the foundation for the digital economy [2].

Over the past decade, the availability of cloud infrastructure and computing services has facilitated the growth of digital platforms that have gradually penetrated almost all sectors of the economy. One can identify three broad categories of such platforms: those that provide digital services and products to individual users, such as social media; those that mediate the exchange of goods and services, such as e-commerce or business-to-business platforms; and those that mediate and facilitate labour exchange between different users, such as businesses, workers and consumers, including digital labour platforms such as Upwork or Uber. These platforms redefine the means of economic exchange and increasingly shape the world of work [2].

In the last years, we have seen the development of data-intensive technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) offer greater consumer choice and personalisation. The use of data – whether sold to third parties or used by firms to advertise or tailor their own products – has become integral to business models.

Digital technologies and data are increasingly shaping and facilitating scientific research. Scientists are generally positive about the impacts of digitalisation on their work, with digital technologies facilitating science across borders, collaboration and efficiency.

We can readily observe rapid innovation in many digital products in daily use. For example, smartphones and the networks they rely on are moving to implement 5G technology despite 4G (LTE) networks only beginning commercial rollout a decade ago. At the same time, online email and video streaming services are implementing increasingly sophisticated features underpinned by machine learning and AI. These advances culminate from a vast array of research and innovation activities. [3]



## Skills, Jobs, and Locations do Not Always Match

Educational systems have not kept pace with the changing nature of work, resulting in many employers saying they cannot find enough workers with the skills they need. In a McKinsey survey of young people and employers in nine countries, 40 per cent of employers said lack of skills was the main reason for entry-level job vacancies. Sixty per cent said that new graduates were not adequately prepared for the world of work. One of the mismatches is locational: there may not be available and qualified workers to be found where there is demand for work. We can see this geographic mismatch across regions within countries and between countries. [4]

While today's technology sectors produce fewer jobs than the ones that preceded them, their indirect impacts on job creation are far greater as they create additional demand for non-tradable in the local economy, in turn explaining the shift in employment from manufacturing to services experienced by most advanced economies.

Digitalisation is transforming business landscapes and the world of work and redefining production, consumption, and distribution boundaries. This has created tremendous opportunities, as new products, processes, and techniques have emerged, but has also created threats, as new ways of employment pose new challenges to employers and employees.

Will the near future offer me a job, or will the future expect me to reskill?

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## Untouchability: A curse for the humanity

*By Ray Kanti Shekhar, Bangladesh*

Shanti Bashfor, like others of her community in Gaibandha city, a northern district headquarter of Bangladesh, has been in a struggle for years to get unfettered from the curse of untouchability. She belongs to the Harijan community who shoulders the responsibility for cleaning up the city every day.



*Photo Shekhar Kanti Ray*

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Her eight family members live in two rooms house made of a corrugated iron sheet on the bank of Ghagat lake (Alai River) on the city's north end. During rainy seasons the members of around 30 families of the community suffer badly from flood, and the unprotected latrine and tubewell along the lake showcase how flawed the sanitation system is, posing a health risk for the community people.

## Fair payment is a far cry for the community

Shanti Bashfor (45) is working as a cleaner in Pourashava. She has worked there since 1987. She earns Tk. 1000 (USD 11.80) a month. She works for four hours from 5 AM every day. A few years back, her husband died, and since then, she has become the breadwinner for her family. How do you manage your family with this income? She kept silent for a while and replied, *"we have to manage somehow. We get support from others, and in most cases, we manage loans from the moneylenders at high-interest rates. When we get a monthly salary, most of it goes for paying loans. In addition, I get widow-allowance of Tk.1500 from the government after every three months."*



Photo Shekhar Kanti Ray

Her son visits different villages daily in search of toilet cleaning works, and on a good day, he can earn up to Tk. 300. However, some days he comes back empty-handed. Her daughter Tarjen Bashfor (20) and her two kids got shelter at mum's home after her husband died in a road accident. Both mother and daughter look sick, and the lack of nutrition is visible in their appearance.

Aduri Bashfor (35), the next-door neighbor of Shanti Bashfor, is not much different from others. Her occupation and income are the same as Shanti Bashfor. She is yet to get a widow allowance from the concerned government offices. Aduri, along with her four daughters and two sons, lives with her father and brother. And altogether, around 17 members of these three families share the same premise in three separate rooms. The premises is not spacious enough for a comfortable living. And the lavatory along the lake is unprotected. How do you use it? The family members felt shy and replied, *"We are accustomed to the situation. We generally use it in the dark, and during daylight, we use neighbor's toilet."* A tubewell near the house is the only place to shower and collect water for drinking and other household use.



**Ray Kanti Shekhar**

is based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. He is a development professional and researcher. He has 15 years professional experiences. He has expertise in participatory research, training, investigative reporting and writing in the areas of climate change, natural resource management and rights issues of marginal communities.





Photo Shekhar Kanti Ray

## The community lacks decent living facilities

Water and sanitation are the two significant issues for the residents of the Harijan community. Uttam Bashfor (48) and Alo Rani Bashfor (38), a couple with two children, showed us how their bamboo-made house basement and tubewell were damaged in the flood. They use toilets and tube wells in their neighborhoods, and the experiences are not always good. Alo Rani Bashfor explained, *"They get angry with us, and sometimes it results in a quarrel. But what can we do? We don't have any other options but to use their facilities."*

The lack of work has held the community back for centuries. We met Prokash Bashfor (55), who earns from toilet cleaning works outside of the city. He said, "Every day I have to go to the villages for work. If my luck favors, then I can earn up to Tk. 500 on a day. If I cannot earn, we have to eat less, or starve or have to borrow money from others to run the family." People of the Harijan community are not familiar with alternative income-generating activities, which is very important for a better living.

The social structure forces them to get stuck in this occupation for centuries. Joy Bashfor (27), the supervisor of the cleaners of Gaibandha Pourashava, explained the situation, "Our issues are not properly reached out to the concerned authorities. School authorities don't want to admit our children to their schools. They look down on us due to our work. We are not allowed to eat and having tea in restaurants." Another youth from this community, Jeet Bashfor (22), reflected on other issues, *"We don't have our residential colony. If we had, then latrine, sanitation, health, education, accommo-*



*ation, and different basic needs would improve. We cannot go to restaurants due to our occupations, but those engaged in the same field outside of our community can easily avail of those facilities."*

*"Moreover, the environment in and around our residences is not friendly for a decent living. Outsiders come here with liquor and drink here. They make a disturbance to our society. We don't feel safe, and our girls get married at an early age due to insecurity," he says.*



Photo Shekhar Kanti Ray

## Exclusion hinders the development

We met some members of Rabidas community at Chakmamrojpur village of Kholahati union on the west of Gaibandha city. The community people live on their land but have no cultivable land, and most of them are engaged in shoemaking. Shanti Rabidas (50) and her husband Mirka Rabidas (70) narrated the changes in their society, "We had our houses in the city, but we were uprooted there when they acquired our lands for development purposes. We didn't get compensation. Our forefathers were not aware enough to claim their rights. Here we have houses on our land, but we don't have facilities like water and sanitation." The community's women sometimes work as day laborers in crop fields and sometimes in employment generation programs under social safety net programs. Bablu Rabidas (40), a shoemaker from this community, explained how untouchability makes their lives difficult, *"If we start a new business, like grocery shop, people will not buy from us. We are Rabidas, shoemaking is our ancestral work, and people are habituated to underestimate our profession."*

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## Social movement brings positive changes

Khilan Rabidas (26), an activist from the Rabidas community, shared some critical insights about their movements on their rights, "We are mobilizing and encouraging our people to claim their rights from the duty bearers and change the mindset of the mainstream community towards us. We have been able, to some extent, to initiate the process. However, we have a lot to do to change the situation, and an integrated approach involving people of all spheres is a must to bring out the results of our movements."

ABALAMBAN, a local NGO, has been engaged in improving the situation of the excluded communities. Probir Chakraborty, the executive director of ABALAMBAN, mentioned some critical criteria for the communities' betterment: "These communities have their way of living, different culture, different lifestyle and different food habit. We should acknowledge and respect these identities before taking any development program for them. Many of us lack proper knowledge about these communities. They are not properly documented due to our ignorance. For any development program for them, the three key issues should be properly addressed;

- Proper identification of the community and their population,
- Properly identify their needs and,
- properly design and implementation of location-specific actions.

Mr. Chakraborty added that during the lockdown, the people of these communities were provided with food supports from Local Government Institutions (Pourashava), the Department of social welfare, and the Human Rights Program of UNDP. But they need continuous supports as they are deprived of their basic needs and rights.

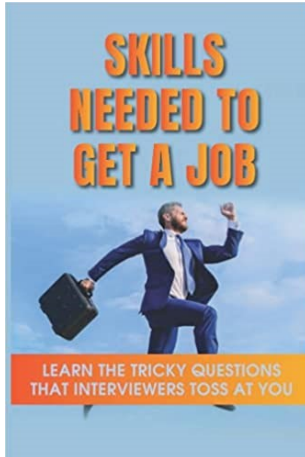




Book

## Skills Needed To Get A Job

*By Danilo Petrullo (Author)*



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