

Book Review

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‘**Understanding Childhood and Adolescence**’, edited by Prof. Namita Ranganathan is a compendium of profoundly researched and engaging academic chapters that cover the historical development, professional perspectives, educational technologies and methodologies in learning. The focus on gender, inclusion and diversity makes it a holistic text.

- Education is undergoing a great change. The educators’ role in global dynamics, new societal perspectives, the student as a co-learner, parents as stakeholders, are some of the issues that are being explored, as we go forward into the millennia. Schools at present are working to recalibrate themselves into quality schools of the future. The larger patterns emerging are:
- The contours of global citizenship are shifting.
- The barrier between a human being and a machine is shrinking.
- A focus on sustainable goals is the future of students and educators.

Amidst so many uncertainties, what is the future path we must traverse? What will our students need to know, and believe in order to add value to such a rapidly changing world?

We need to prepare children for classrooms that are volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA).

This book provides a wide range of definitions and approaches to modern day understanding of learning. The author has tried to establish a relationship between intelligence, creativity, emotions and theory. The identification of subjects related to the nature of knowledge in the Indian context have been depicted through an interdisciplinary, disciplinary, epistemic and procedural lens.

We are facing a global learning crisis. Apart from the quarter of a billion children who are out of school today, even more than 330 million children who are in school are failing to learn. If learning has to be inclusive, lifelong and across stratas, we will need to refine, extend and

reinforce the existing model by re-engineering methodology, pedagogy and transaction.

The contributors in this book try to look at innovative strategies that blur lines between formal and informal learning, which is critical to transformation. Many of them speak from a lifetime's perspective of learning. While others create linkages through their chapters that weave together the context and interdependent role of social and institutional spaces.

Across the world, especially in India, much of the curricula in the 21st century schools are still focused on equipping students for life in the last century. The Indian population is young. Approximately 30.8 per cent of India’s 1.1 billion people is under fourteen years of age. By 2030, India will have one of the youngest populations in the world. This vast resource will shape the nation and the world. Its primary values, aspirations, knowledge, abilities, skills and dilemmas will have their bearing on their choices and indeed on the world that they inherit.

Preparing the young population with the necessary literacies, skills and attitudes, is the challenge.

Interpersonal communications and problem-solving offer the most powerful keys to success in the modern economy, replacing the narrowly focused, repetitive skills that are the earmarks of the industrial age. Literacy, numeracy and other fundamentals are still necessary prerequisites for employment. Students today must also be trained to think creatively, innovate widely and use technology-based collaborative tools effectively.

In this book, the attempt is to bring together a myriad strands and weave a fabric of learning which will be of interest to specialists, teachers, principals and civil society. Infact, to all those who are on a voyage of discovery of an evolving child centred educational experience.

The wide range of chapters carried in the book, though varying in length, style and content are research oriented and throw light on the emerging scenarios of learning in a digital world,

the rights of children, issues of adolescence and the spectrum of multiple intelligences.

Young adults are likely to take up as many as seven different careers in a lifetime, in contrast to youth in the past. In this changing environment it is essential to adapt, innovate and cope with change. Students need to meet the challenges of the 21st century, shape wellbeing and sustainability for themselves and others. Adolescents need transformative competencies through which they contribute to a better future, create new values, reconcile tensions and dilemmas.

The same technologies that created the Internet and the information revolution will have the power to transform education. What we now see on the horizon is Education 3.0, a new phase in which educators will develop and implement a transformative template for the coming years. Education 3.0 will build on the Education 2.0 reforms, but add the power of cutting-edge communications, the latest pedagogical tools, and collaborative technologies to equip learners for work and life in the present age. This will adequately prepare students for the future.

The importance of growing up in a digital world has been reflected in one of the chapters. It throws light on the trends that have taken over large spaces in the virtual life of adolescents. They are leading a parallel life on Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, Vchat etc. which is affecting their social and emotional identities. This leads to disturbing psychological trends and mental wellbeing.

Digitalization has created both connections and divides leading to social isolation and marginalization, creation of stereotypes and leapfrogging of children into early adulthood.

The book explores creative development in education and the related factors which are environmental, sociological, philosophical and psychological.

Cultural and Ecological literacy are an integral part of 21st century learning. It helps us to understand diversity and the environment. It is imperative that the education we receive helps us to see ourselves as part of a complex, interconnected, and interdependent world. Today, more than ever, we need teachers who challenge prevailing standardised education policies and practices, in favour of more individualised holistic approaches. This will help

to tap into the talents of children to be better prepared to live productively in a rapidly changing world.

Teachers need to implement processes which foster student autonomy and leadership. Encourage inventive learners with skills, channelize their creative spirit, maximize liberty to make decisions and develop global partnerships. We must enable our children to live together in mutual empowerment. If we can create a common humanity in our school communities, it will go a long way in generating collaborative careers which are the need of the hour.

Many issues that are faced by schools today are essentially about the skills and sensibilities, the attitudes and qualities of children. Classrooms have become challenging spaces where students come together from varying social, cultural and economic backgrounds, often physically and mentally challenged with a baggage of divorced or single parents, sexual abuse, victims of domestic violence and a plethora of behavioural issues as a result of a violent society.

Consequently, traditional responses to the demand for education that are essentially quantitative and knowledge based are no longer appropriate. It is not enough to supply each child early in life with a store of knowledge. Each individual must be equipped to seize learning opportunities throughout life, both to broaden his/her knowledge, skills and attitudes, and to adapt to a changing, complex and interdependent world.

As demonstrated by the authors, this book would not only be useful to all the school heads, teachers, educators and policy makers but also serve as a valuable resource of reference in libraries. The content is crucial for classroom teachers who want to help children learn to their maximum potential. Teachers will benefit greatly from the knowledge and understanding of many complex topics.

This valuable resource, empowers teachers with core teaching principles and mind friendly strategies along with new educational ideas, theories and trends which are reliable and long lasting.

- ‘Understanding Childhood and Adolescence’ is a reader friendly resource which covers both processes and content and identifies specific

characteristics of successful strategies, providing techniques that are:

- Easy to learn and implement
- Adaptable for differentiated instruction and individual learning styles
- Applicable to all grade levels
- Teacher tested and proven to deliver results in any school setting
- Aligned with contemporary neuro and cognitive science research

Students of education, experienced teachers and administrators can find inspiration in the ideas and strategies that the authors share in this wonderful compendium.

Prof. Namita Ranganathan has edited a book that reveals a practical approach to implementing best practices in the classroom. Exploration of this book will bring a wealth of material to invent a new learning future for children and adolescents.