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Building a \$80 billion creative economy: The education system must evolve to make students future ready

We cannot afford to let 91% of our students remain unprepared for the very economy that will define India's future. The creative revolution is already here. The only question is: Will we equip our youth to lead it, or will we leave them behind?



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Article Content:

What is one challenge that is common to educators and employers alike? 'Constructing creative approaches to problem-solving'. Given this micro perspective in the macro context of the emerging digital and creative economies, it is imperative for the education system to transition from rote learning to a competency-based curriculum, which can prepare individuals to a competency-based curriculum, which can prepare individuals for real life and workplace complexities.

The creative economy is more than an economic opportunity or a sector - it is the future of work, it is India's chance to lead in global innovation, design, digital media, and entrepreneurship. It is projected to contribute \$80 billion to India's GDP by 2026. But will our students – the future workforce - be ready to participate, leave alone lead this transformation? On the other hand, digital skills and information technology in the new world have also been recast. Information technology is no longer only coding, but AI-powered tools, Web 3.0, and blockchain, and most

companies are trying to progress to AI, big data, and cloud computing. To be able to use emerging technologies, logic, process thinking,

A Nation of Rote Learners Cannot Lead a Creative Revolution

With the fifth anniversary of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 upon us and the Union Budget 2025-26 prioritizing 21st-century skills, is the roadmap looking mature? If creativity is the currency of the future, we are woefully underinvested. The Union Budget's emphasis on 21st-century skills is a step in the right direction, but it must translate into real classroom change. Employers no longer hire based on degrees alone, they seek critical thinkers, problem solvers, and digital natives. We don't need incremental improvements; we need an education revolution.

Given the consequences of mass participation in the creative economy - or the lack of it- Primus Partners conducted a situational self-assessment critical thinking & creative solutions, brainstorming, teamwork, real-life application of learning, design thinking, observation, and research.

The survey shows the need for rethinking education to prepare students for a world driven by creativity, digital fluency, and problem-solving as a force multiplier for economic transformation - only 9% of students demonstrate high readiness in essential creative economy skills like design thinking, research, and problem-solving.

The vast majority are stuck in a system that prioritizes memorization over mastery and standardization over innovation. The bulk of students who participated in the survey show promise, but potential alone is not enough. Without an urgent, systemic shift in how we educate, we risk creating a generation of jobseekers in a world that needs job-creators. Would any company survive if only 9% of its workforce possessed the necessary skills? Then why are we comfortable with an education system that leaves most students unprepared for the future?

The Readiness Gap: A Nation's Creative Potential at Risk

We celebrate India's booming start-up culture, its expanding digital workforce, and its rapid ascent as a global media and design hub. But inside our classrooms, students are still being trained for a world that no longer exists:

- 1 in 5 students struggle with critical thinking, problem-solving, and research. That is not just an education gap, it is an innovation deficit.
- 30% of government school students and 13% of private school students lack the ability to apply their knowledge to real-world challenges. They can recite theories but struggle to translate them into action.
- Private schools foster better hands-on learning, while government schools produce keen observers. But neither is enough to equip students for an economy that rewards creativity and innovation.

The Classroom-Economy Disconnect: A Crisis We Can No Longer Ignore What must change:

1. From Rote Learning to Inquiry-Based Education: This should no longer be a standard for "best schools". ALL classrooms must now bring in pedagogies where students don't memorize

answers to questions but drive their understanding by questioning. Schools must integrate case studies, live projects, and experiential learning models.

2. Design Thinking & Digital Literacy as Core Subjects: AI, blockchain, AR/VR, these are not future skills; they are today's reality. Schools must embed these as core and discrete subjects, not electives.

3. Making Student Start-Ups a Norm, Not an Exception: If India wants to lead the creative economy, entrepreneurship must be taught early. Schools should foster start-up incubation labs, industry mentorship, and real-world problem-solving.

Reimagining Education for a Creative India

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