EDUCATIONPLUS

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W e live in a world that is VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous). How do we equip children with the skills they need to make their way through this environment? Authored by educators V. Raghunathan and Meena Raghunathan, *To Every Parent, To Every School* addresses this topic and offers insights and action points meant for students, teachers, parents and educational institutions. Excerpts from an interview with the authors:

Are children in India truly happy at school? Should this be a parameter to measure a school's performance?

Our intuitive feeling is that, with stress on various fronts increasing, childhood and school are less happy than they used to be. We believe that students being happy is an important criterion for the school to be called successful. As we mention in the book, 'We see schools routinely ranked for their excellence within a town or city, formally or informally. The parameters for such rankings are frequently based on the performance of their students in Board exams, or how many children went to IITs or other Ivy League institutions within the country or abroad, and so on. It is a pity that such rankings seldom consider stress factors that schools inject into the students, how happy children feel while in the school or how much a school stresses on cooperation as compared to competition between students

It's a whole new world

To Every Parent, To Every School, by educators V. Raghunathan and Meena Raghunathan, offers insights on how to prepare children to face today's challenging environment
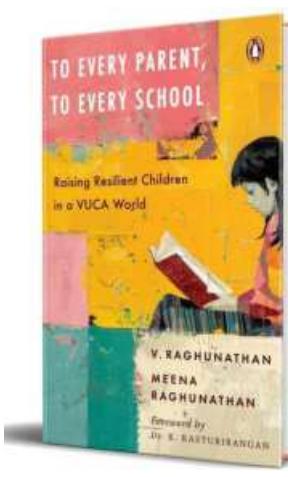

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and other such factors.'

Do the book's insights apply only to children? Are there any takeaways for college students?

The book is applicable to all ages. In fact, much of the thinking and many of the models developed in a corporate context. For instance, the concept of VUCA came into play after 9/11 in 2001. Before the end of the decade, a lot of work on how this framework could be used and applied in business had taken place, and this had entered the mainstream of management thinking, practice and training.
We focused the book on younger children because in such things, it is always important to begin early. Having said that, if not in school, our young people must get these inputs at least in college. Since they are at an age when they can figure things out for themselves, they could

individually use the book to shape themselves. Additionally, if colleges do structured programmes around these issues, it would be a great support to their students.

The book envisions a shift from competition to cooperation in the education

system. Is this possible?

It isn't easy, but it is such an important and fundamental re-orientation that we cannot just give up. It requires a change in the mindset of adults and conviction among education leaders. We require educators and parents to review how they

think about success. Is success about winning the race or improving one's performance?
To inculcate co-operation, we could reward collective as much as individual efforts, institute awards for the most improved child, award socially-conscious or civic-minded children, enhance the importance of group assignments, and so on.

Does the concept of 'ranking' put 'learning' on the backseat?

The practice of evaluating and ranking students can put the intrinsic value of learning on the backseat. The emphasis on grades can lead to a focus on rote memorisation rather than deep comprehension. It can increase stress and anxiety among students, and stifle creativity and intellectual risk-taking.
In contrast, educational systems that prioritise formative assessments, personalised

feedback, and project-based learning can foster a more meaningful and engaging learning experience.

What effect has the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown had on children?

COVID did set our children back in terms of being part of a group, an institution and the process of education. We feel it has loosened social ties and made 'real life' interactions less important and the virtual world more real. We do see differences in the children who have spent their formative years in lockdown. They are more prone to stress, anxiety, not being able to open up, and so on. And not enough is being done to support them. We aren't sure whether this effect is going to be permanent, but we do feel it has altered the children at some fundamental level.

Will the degree of VUCA increase in the future?

Yes, factors such as technological advancements, artificial intelligence, globalisation, climate change, resource shortages, political and economic instability and health crises will contribute to a more volatile and unpredictable world. A comprehensive approach that emphasises resilience, adaptability, critical thinking, lifelong learning, effective communication, digital literacy, global awareness, financial literacy, and overall well-being will better prepare ourselves and our children.

To Every Parent, To Every School: Raising Resilient Children in a VUCA World; V Raghunathan, Meena Raghunathan; Penguin Viking, ₹ 699.

Ranjan Bose

E ntrepreneurship education has become increasingly significant in preparing students for the challenges and complexities of an ever-changing world. An entrepreneurial mindset encourages critical thinking, creativity, and resilience, providing students the tools to identify opportunities and solve problems innovatively. Consequently, several universities support incubators, accelerators, and entrepreneurship courses to provide students with hands-on experience in developing business ideas, creating prototypes, and pitching to potential investors. These programmes offer mentorship, funding opportunities, and access to angel networks, which are crucial for the success of early-stage start-ups. By engaging in entrepreneurship, students gain a deeper understanding of business operations and hone their financial/project management and leadership skills. Not all students need to start a company but developing an entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial mindset is an essential soft skill in today's evolving educational landscape.

Varied approach
International exchange programmes are invaluable immersive experiences to broaden students' perspectives, particularly in understanding and addressing diverse problem statements across different geographies. They expose students to other cultures, educational systems, and different ways of doing things and enhance adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and global awareness.
Although campus incubators and exchange programmes serve different objectives, combining elements of both offers advantages by leveraging their complementary benefits. While different geographic regions face similar chal-

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Double the gain

The synergy between entrepreneurship education and international exchange programmes fosters cross-cultural innovation and holistic skill development

lenges, the approaches to solving problems often vary significantly. For instance, waste management practices, renewable energy adoption, primary education programmes, and public health strategies differ widely across countries. These diverse approaches provide fertile ground to find innovative solutions and kickstarting entrepreneurial journeys.
International exchange programmes also offer opportunities for students to engage with local communities through projects, internships, or field studies, which provide insights into grassroots issues and everyday challenges. Being in a different geographical setting gives students access to local data, research, and case studies that are not readily available elsewhere. Additionally, exchange programmes encourage collaboration between students from different cultural and academic backgrounds. Working in diverse teams enhances creativity and innovation, as team members bring varied perspectives and problem-solving approaches. Students often learn to identify and evaluate busi-

ness opportunities in different markets, considering local consumer behaviours, regulatory environments, and economic conditions. This is crucial to develop innovative and viable solutions in diverse settings. Finally, students get to build networks with peers, academics, industry professionals, and other entrepreneurs worldwide.

Benefits
When combined, entrepreneurship and international exchange programmes create a comprehensive educational framework that fosters cross-cultural innovation, international networking, and holistic skill development. This immersive experience nurtures independence and resilience, as students navigate the challenges of living and studying in a foreign country.
One of the primary advantages of this combination is the cross-pollination of ideas. Students participating in entrepreneurship exchange programmes can bring diverse perspectives and innovative practices from their host countries back to their entrepreneurial projects. This exposure

to different markets, consumer behaviours, and business models can lead to developing more creative and globally relevant solutions.
Another significant benefit is the establishment of a solid international network. Students can connect with peers, mentors, and industry leaders worldwide, creating a network that supports their entrepreneurial endeavours long after graduation. This is invaluable to access new markets, secure international partnerships and funding, and stay abreast of global trends.
It is essential to recognise the possible evolution of a unique ecosystem in the process that encompasses the incubators of the two universities, their mentor networks, investor networks, and the involvement of faculty and students. While this model can be implemented domestically, the true advantage lies in the internationalisation of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
There are examples of institutions that have incorporated an international dimension into their in-

cubators and entrepreneurship programmes. The University of California, Berkeley, the U.S., offers the Global Social Venture Competition, in which students can participate in an incubator programme and present their ideas internationally. The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs helps equip aspiring European entrepreneurs with the skills necessary to start a business in another participating European country. The Casa Foundation aids international students pursuing business-related studies in Canada by bridging the knowledge gap. The Indo-Canadian Entrepreneurship Exchange programme, offered by the University of Toronto in partnership with an Indian institution, supports budding entrepreneurs and establishes a two-way innovation talent pipeline. Yet another institution in India is exploring potential opportunities with the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the U.S.
In the evolving global education and entrepreneurship landscape, combining entrepreneurship with international exchange programmes represents a powerful educational model that equips students with practical skills, broadens their cultural perspectives, and exposes them to diverse ideas, fostering the next generation of innovative, globally-minded and internationally-trained entrepreneurs. There is a strong need to design focused "knowledge and entrepreneurship exchange programmes (KEEP)" that will enhance the capacities of aspiring and early-stage entrepreneurs and increase their overall entrepreneurial success rate, which will also lead to the internationalisation of the entrepreneurial ecosystems in India, an idea whose time has come.

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Reflect on your interests
Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help

OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I finished B.Tech. Mechanical Engineering and worked in an NBFC for around 18 months. Now I can't decide whether to continue in Finance or Mechanical Engineering. How can I decide? Marga

Dear Marga,
What do you enjoy most? Reflect on your interests, passion, and career aspirations to identify which field aligns more with your professional goals and personal interests. Where do your core competencies lie? Define your short-term and long-term career goals and research career opportunities, growth prospects, and job markets across both fields. Stay updated with the latest trends, developments, and innovations to identify emerging opportunities in each field. Finally, work out pros-and-cons list and see what makes you happy: personally and professionally.

I have finished Class 12 and am interested in coding and programming. But my JEE result was bad. I am thinking of doing BCA but am told that opportunities are less. What should I do next? Jai

Dear Jai,
While a B.Tech. in Computer Science or Information Technology might offer more opportunities, a BCA will provide a solid foundation in computer applications and programming, as it focuses on computer applications, software development,

programming languages, and IT solutions. It also provides opportunities for internships, projects, and practical experience in software development, IT solutions, and technology applications. Career opportunities are available across software development, web development, database management, system analysis, and IT consultancy.

I am in second year of B.Sc. Physics (Hons) from Delhi University College. I am also preparing for the Civil Services Exams. I am finding it difficult to manage both. How can I balance the two? Shreya

Dear Shreya,
Work on time management and redefine your priorities to find that balance. Create a detailed weekly schedule that includes your Physics lectures, CSE coaching classes, self-study time, revision, practice tests, relaxation and leisure activities. Make sure every activity is included especially the breaks and rest time. Your college attendance is mandatory for course completion so ensure that everything is planned only after that. Integrate your Physics and CSE studies by leveraging the common topics, concepts, and principles to reduce duplication and to optimise study time. Use effective study methods and techniques to maximise efficiency. Communicate your difficulties to your college professors, and seek their support and guidance to balance your commitments. Maintain a healthy work-life balance and prioritise self-care to avoid burnout and fatigue. Focus on your goals, and celebrate your progress and

achievements.

I have done M.Sc. Zoology and have developed a keen interest in Nutritional Science. What are my career options? Simron

Dear Simron,
With a M.Sc. in Zoology, you can get into sectors such as Animal Biodiversity Prospecting, Bioinformatics, Ecosystem Monitoring, Wildlife Conservation and Environmental Management. If you are interested in further studies you could do a Ph.D as well. Nutritional Science is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on the relationship between diet, health, and disease and offers diverse career opportunities in healthcare, research, public health, the food industry, and more. You will need to do a Master's degree in Nutritional Science, Food Science, or a related field, or relevant certifications. Some courses you can consider are Certified Nutrition Specialist (CNS), Registered Dietitian (RD) or Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN), Diploma in Dietetics and Applied Nutrition (DDAN), and Postgraduate Diploma in Nutrition and Dietetics. This will open career opportunities as a clinical nutritionist or dietitian, a public health nutritionist, a nutritional researcher or scientist, a food and nutrition consultant, a nutrition writer or communicator, and a nutritional product developer or specialist.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge

WIDE ANGLE
Albert P' Rayan

Private or government?

While facilities and quality of education in government schools need to be upgraded, private schools also need to be held accountable to the government and the public

Recently, I stumbled upon a thought-provoking tale about an old woman who used to sell *idlis* for just one rupee each. Her loyal customers cherished her affordable treats until a savvy businessman opened a new shop nearby, giving away *idlis* for free to lure the crowd. Naturally, people flocked to the new shop, leaving the old woman's stall deserted. However, one day, the businessman hiked the price to ₹5 per *idli*. A few months later, he raised it to ₹10. The sudden hike left the customers frustrated and they searched for the old woman, only to discover that she had closed her shop and disappeared.

This story perfectly mirrors how private telecom operators initially offered free data, attracting millions of users only to gradually hike tariffs once they had a solid subscriber base and have weakened the government-run BSNL. One may argue that private telecom operators provide better service than BSNL and justify their higher tariffs, but the real question is why the government has allowed the once profit-making BSNL to lose its competitive edge in the market. Analysing this issue may lead to more uncomfortable questions.

Three kinds

This has a parallel in the education sector as well, with the principles of privatisation being applied to education. This model is often referred to as the "McDonaldisation" of education, as private schools run by popular groups apply market-oriented principles such as efficiency, standardisation of services, brand reliability, and consumerism to education. This raises questions about whether private schools have become stronger, leading to the weakening of government schools, and whether the impact on common people is positive or negative.

There are three main types of schools in our country: government-run, government-aided, and private. The first is fully funded and operated by the government. The second is funded by the government but owned and run by private trusts. Private schools are run by individuals or organisations and funded through student fees.

With a rapid increase in the privatisation of the Indian education sector in the past two decades, the number of private educational institutions across the country has increased.

According to UDISE+, a Management Information System initiated by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, private schools account for around 35% of the total schools.

It is undeniable that parents prefer private schools over government-run ones for various reasons. Certain myths have been perpetuated such as the belief that government schools lack competent teachers and cannot provide a good education. Some even borrow money or sell property to admit their children to private schools and pay the exorbitant fees because they believe that private schools offer a better education and assume that it will lead to greater success in life.

Disadvantages

Many government-aided and some government-run schools surpass private schools in several aspects, including the quality of education and affordability. However, in some areas, private schools have an edge. While there are notable advantages to studying in private schools, there are also many disadvantages. Private schools often charge exorbitant fees for tuition, textbooks, uniforms, and extracurricular activities. Some even collect capitation fees under different names, such as development or building funds. This is a huge burden on families that cannot afford these costs. Even middle-class people are lured by the empty promises and tall claims made by certain private schools, leading them to seek admission for their children despite the high fees. This has become a struggle between the haves and the have-nots, creating educational inequality and denying opportunities to students who cannot afford the fees.

Edupreneurs in India are more interested in expanding their business than in educating the masses. As their primary goal is revenue generation and profit-making, students' learning outcomes take a back seat.

The idea that schools impart values has become a myth, as more and more private schools teach the lesson that only the fittest can survive. With their focus on making money, they cannot instill values in students or produce service-oriented citizens. The emphasis on academic performance and the competitive environment in many private institutions can lead to high levels of stress and pressure on students.

Although it may not be possible for governments to run all schools, considering the importance of equality, affordability, and social justice, effective measures must be taken to develop infrastructure and improve the quality of education in government schools. This is necessary to foster the belief that government-run schools can deliver better and higher-quality education.

While academic freedom is important, it is also crucial to hold private schools accountable to the government and the public. Proper regulations should be in place to prevent schools from charging exorbitant fees.

Education is a liberating force. True education frees people from the shackles of servitude and submissiveness, enabling them to question and develop their thinking capacity. It contributes to their intellectual growth and empowers them to become engaged citizens. Can a system that commodifies educational services and promotes inequality and unhealthy competition among students truly "educate" them? McDonaldisation may please the nation's taste buds, but may not be good for its health.

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GREEN CAREERS HUB

Nature's storyteller

Senior news anchor and environment reporter Gargi Rawat on charting a career in environmental journalism

The fifth in the monthly series by **WWF-India** *that highlights niche and unconventional green careers through the stories of well-known personalities from the field of environment and conservation*

My story is one of passion and perseverance, shaped by my early exposure to Nature and India's wildlife. My father was in the Indian Forest Service, which gave me the chance to explore various protected areas across India while growing up. This early fascination with the environment significantly influenced my career choices and professional journey.

I spent my formative years in boarding school at the Welham Girls' High School in Dehra Dun, which also nurtured my interest in wildlife and Nature. I later pursued my higher education at St. Stephen's College, where I completed my Economics Honours degree. While many of my peers were preparing for MBA programmes and gearing up for corporate careers, I found myself increasingly drawn to the media and grew interested in making documentaries. Though I applied to university for further studies, my path took a different turn when I joined the news channel, NDTV.

My journey into the world of media coincided with my enrollment in the Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Law and Policy offered by WWF-India. The hands-on experience I gained at NDTV, combined with my academic pursuits, laid a solid foundation for my career in environmental journalism.

Seizing opportunities

For over two decades, I have been lucky to have been deeply involved in various campaigns and wildlife shows. One of my earliest opportunities came through the wildlife show *Born Wild*, anchored by my colleague, Swati Thiyagarajan. I worked on the Hindi version of the show, *Safari India*, which allowed me to travel extensively and explore numerous wildlife parks. I've had the opportunity to spearhead and be part of several groundbreaking environmental campaigns such as *Greenathon*, a 24-hour telethon focused on environmental issues, which brought together celebrities, corporations, activists, and the public. This was followed by campaigns such as *Save our Tigers*, *Saving India's Coast*, *Green Awards*, and the impact of tourism in hill stations.

My career at NDTV has spanned significant changes in the media landscape, from the growth of news television to the rise of social media. I recall the early days of social media integration in our campaigns, particularly the introduction of platforms like Twitter, which revolutionised audience engagement and interaction.

Now, I am more studio-bound, and a typical day for me involves participating in a news conference call to discuss the top stories of the day and looking at our bulletin run-down. I anchor several bulletins in the day and later the 8 PM news, which is more of a news magazine format. In addition to my work at NDTV, I have authored a book, *Tiger Season*, based on my experiences as a wildlife reporter.

For those aspiring to enter the field of environmental journalism, first, thank you. We need more people in this space. I emphasise the importance of curiosity, critical thinking, and empathy. Learn continuously and stay informed about environmental issues. The media plays a crucial role in creating awareness and driving positive change, especially in today's context where environmental challenges are more pressing than ever, and forests are increasingly endangered in our pursuit of short-sighted 'development' goals.

Prady Kumaar

A keen understanding of new trends and technology is essential to navigate the ever-changing world of digital marketing.

For students stepping into this arena, staying abreast of the latest advancements isn't just helpful; it is a necessity. The future of digital marketing has lots of exciting opportunities.

So here are a few things every student should understand to excel in this industry.

AI-driven campaigns: Artificial Intelligence (AI) is assisting in crafting personalised ads tailored to each individual. Through sophisticated computer programmes, AI sifts through vast data sets to determine potential preferences, enabling advertisers to display items aligned with users' interests. Students should get to know AI tools and platforms to be able use data-driven insights in their marketing plans.

Immersive experiences: By providing interactive experiences, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are transforming the way that brands interact with consumers and letting people see products in real-

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On brand

Digital marketing is brimming with fresh concepts and opportunities that students must keep up with to be able to be effective in the online world

life situations or explore virtual worlds. Students should explore the potential of AR and VR in marketing campaigns to create compelling brand experiences that capture attention and drive engagement.

Voice search optimisation: Making sure content is optimised for voice search is crucial, especially with the rise in popularity of voice-activated gadgets like virtual assistants and smart speakers. Students should learn about how voice search works, understand how people talk naturally and pick the right words to use, so that their content can still be found when people search using their voice.

Influencer Marketing: This remains a strong way to promote brands, especially among younger people. Students should understand how important it is to connect and team up with influencers who share their brand's values and appeal to their target audience to reach out to new audiences in a real way and boost engagement with sincere endorsements and recommendations.

Big data and personalisation: Big data analytics empower marketers to develop customised and targeted content strategies that cater to the unique preferences and behaviours of each individual. Students need to know how to collect, analyse, and utilise data effectively to craft compelling marketing experiences in the digital age.

Apart from these, several new trends such as blockchain integration for transparency in ad targeting, the proliferation of chatbots for enhanced customer engagement, and a growing emphasis on privacy-focused marketing strategies are shaping the world of digital marketing.

Blockchain integration: Providing transparency and security in digital transactions, blockchain is becoming important in advertising and marketing. Students should explore how blockchain can enhance ad targeting and attribution while ensuring trust and accountability in online interactions.

Chatbots for customer engagement: By delivering immediate responses and personalised assistance, chatbots are transforming customer service and support and changing the way businesses interact with their customers. Students should embrace chatbot technology to enhance customer engagement and streamline communication processes to improve the overall brand experience.

Privacy-focused marketing: In the light of evolving data regulations and consumer privacy concerns, marketers must prioritise ethical and transparent practices. Students should understand the importance of respecting user privacy and consent while collecting and utilising customer data for marketing purposes.

Digital marketing is brimming with fresh concepts and opportunities. If students keep up with what's happening, they can make a big difference in how marketing happens online.

The writer is CEO, NP Digital India.

Mathew C.D. Chunkapura

The idea of campus placements and placement cells in colleges started as a means to improve admissions and to gain a competitive edge over other colleges. Establishing relationships with corporate companies requires much patience and hard work.

As many companies prefer a single point of contact (SPOC), the placement office (TPO) becomes the liaison officer between industry and academia. Decision-making, organisation and implementation needs to be fast and effective. For example, if a company want to schedule an interview at 9.00 a.m., the TPO has to ensure that all the concerned people are informed and the interview is conducted at the time given. This has become more prevalent after the pandemic.

What can be done

The global recession and the introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has led to a slow down in placements. However, jobs that

To land that job

With the recruitment process becoming more stringent, placement cells need to reorient their operations during times of recession

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are complex and niche skills are still in demand. It is, therefore, importance for students to pursue internships in specialised domains.

For example, cybersecurity is an emerging area but students need to go beyond the syllabus and find internships in area such as Vulnerability Assessment and Penetration Testing, Cloud Security, Network Security, Security Operations Centre and so on. A Civil Engineering student should have experience of being involved in projects of reputed firms for real-time exposure.

Today, manufacturing systems work in tandem with advanced communication and computational technologies such as IoT, Data Analytics, Cloud Computing, Mobility, and Sensor Technology leading to new roles such as Mechanical Design Engineer, Mechanical Integrity Engineer, Rotatives Lifing Engineer, Structural System Design (SSD) Engineer, Performance Engineer, Systems Design Integration Engineer, Aerothermal Engineer: Compressor Aero, Aerothermal Engineer: Combustor Aero, and Aerothermal Engineer: Turbine Aerothermal.

This means that placement cells need to reorient their operations based on the changing business environment especially as bulk recruitments are not happening and the process itself is becoming more stringent. Placement cells need to adhere to an equitable policy.

Approaching platforms and accelerators such as Glassdoors and Ycombinator is an option that will help students land placements in start-ups, both in India and abroad. Encouraging students to participate in programmes such as Google Summer of Code, and hackathons conducted by the regional chapters of IEEE and established companies also helps in achieving placements.

During times of recession, placement cells have to find new ways to help students find a place in hidden and invisible job markets.

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