



IN Focus

AN INDEPENDENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

India took a giant leap forward in including Article 21-A (Right To Education) as a primary right of every citizen and providing free and compulsory education of all children from ages 6 yrs to 14 yrs. The article was enshrined in the Constitution of India in 2002 by the 86th Amendment Act, but it came into effect only by 1st April 2010.

(Note : Prior to this, NPE 1986 and the Programme of Action 1992 envisaged free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality for all children below 14 years by the 21st Century.)

The RTE terms 'independent or free education' as a basic human right. But even after 12 yrs since its implementation, the dream is yet to

be achieved. There can be a lot of reforms through Acts or proposals on paper (like the recent NEP 2020 Guidelines). However, one must study and evaluate their outcome to know whether the original aims and goals of such reforms are being met with or are falling short.

Educational institutions play a significant role in the development of a child, society, nation, and the world at large. It has always been found that successful models are backed and supported by robust education systems that are 'independent' and not handicapped by other aspects of society, such as politics, religion, reservation or elitism.

Based on requests, we have sought to keep the August 2022 theme in line with the concept of Independence in the context of education.

WONDER WORD

Independent learner

Independent learning is a way or process of learning in which learners have control and ownership of their learning. They **regulate**, **direct**, as well as **evaluate** their learning and **learn** due to their actions.

The **independent learner** can make informed choices, set goals, and make decisions about how to fulfil his learning needs. Also, the independent learner takes responsibility for building and performing their learning, monitoring their progress toward accomplishing their learning goals; and self-assess the outcomes of the learning process. **They learn how BEST to learn.**

“Children are as independent as you expect them to be.”

— Maria Montessori

QED Talk

NEP 2020's focus on Creating **INDEPENDENT LEARNERS**

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■ *In the wake of NEP 2020, what is your understanding of this Policy's proposal with regards to Independent Learners?*

The NEP 2020 comes with 3 major proposals with regard to Independent Learners-

- 1. School education—focus on experiential learning** -The policy moves away from rote learning and focuses, instead, on internalisation and experiential learning. Assessments in schools too will change drastically. The policy suggests formative, competency -based assessments that test higher-order skills such as conceptual clarity, analytical and critical thinking. This, in my view, could be the single most important contribution to reforms in the education system.
- 2. Restructuring school curriculum and pedagogy in a new 5+3+3+4 design-** According to the policy, curricular and pedagogical structure and the curricular framework for school education will henceforth be guided by a 5+3+3+4 design, consisting of the Foundational Stage (in two parts, that is, 3 years of Anganwadi/pre-school + 2 years in primary school in Grades 1-2; both together covering ages 3-8), Preparatory Stage (Grades 3-5, covering ages 8-11), Middle Stage (Grades 6-8, covering ages 11-14), and Secondary Stage (Grades 9-12 in two phases, i.e., 9 and 10 in the first and 11 and 12 in the second, covering ages 14-18) supporting the Independent learning in children according to their age.
- 3. Use of mother tongue during teaching** – The policy promotes the use of the mother tongue during teaching which will support independent thinking as they can reason and review in their mother tongue, which makes it easier.

■ *Is someone born an 'independent learner' or can the qualities be taught?*

I believe that some students naturally become independent learners based on life, circumstances and inherent learning styles. They just take the bull by the horns. However, I also believe that dependency on instruction is tied closely to student age and maturity. The older the student, the more independent they tend to be. The good news is students who depend on teachers for instruction can begin developing independent learning traits no matter how old they are. Encouraging the growth of these characteristics can foster self-reliance and responsibility, both now in school and later, in a career. These can be taught.

■ *Is there a particular age from which teachers can start moulding children to become independent learners?*

There is considerable scope to develop independent learning abilities in children from three to five years of age. Teachers and parents can both encourage the growth of self-directed learning in kids. Independent learning is a practice through which kids can develop an inquisitive mind. This is an effortless exercise through which teachers can encourage kids to get involved in from a young age. It's imperative for kids to develop independent learning skills in preschool to increase brain stimulation. Motivating kids to become independent learners has proven to be impactful and enhances the growth and development of the child.

■ *Some people suggest that the term 'Independent Learner' is merely a jargon- it can never be a reality since students ALWAYS need guidance. What is your view on this?*

Independent learning does not necessarily mean working on one's own entirely. After all, in life, we all grow through interaction. You may find that a child is good at sharing a problem with another student during class or others are working efficiently with someone else. A few encourage each other very well and talk through difficulties. On the other hand, a few students are very good at explaining their problems to someone else and so receive help in clarifying their issues. A few are also very creative in explaining concepts to others. These all may be the most effective ways of working independently. Through this practice kids can develop inquisitive minds.

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The most important outcome of education is to help students become independent of formal education.

— Paul E. Gray

■ ***With Right To Education (RTE) in practice, do you find a difference in the levels of 'independence' in academic - self help-social aspects among students from different socio-economic backgrounds?***

The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 which ensures the development of the community. It ensures the nation's progress. Therefore, one of the advantages of the RTE ACT is that it ensures the development of the community and the nation as a whole. The Act seeks to provide social integration in education. There is provision for special training of school drop-outs to bring them at par with students of the same age and also provisions regarding infrastructure and improving facilities in schools which directly supports the students' independent learning.

The upshot of all of the above is that there has been a significant increase in the independent thinking of children across the board, which includes the economically disadvantaged children. As a rider, I must add that this will vary from school to school, depending on the commitment of the staff to the vision of the RTE!

■ ***To what extent did the recent pandemic scenario create or destroy independence in learning?***

These are all terms that have been on the tips of our tongues in the education world since Covid-19 changed our lives forever. We know how stressful learning through the pandemic has been for parents, teachers, and students. However, we're also hearing inspiring stories of resourceful teachers and resilient families meeting the challenges head on and ensuring that students are continuing to learn and thrive in the 'new normal'. On the other hand, remote learning models during COVID-19 gave students a unique opportunity and incentive to develop and apply many important 21st century skills. Students learned new ways to collaborate and communicate as they interacted with their classmates and educators in new ways. They were also increasingly being asked to think critically and creatively and solve problems as they found new ways of accessing and demonstrating their independent learning. In Chandigarh in particular, thanks to PISA, the children have been actively encouraged to become independent thinkers as CCT has become a way of life.

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Independent learning is a practice through which kids can develop inquisitive minds.

■ ***By which grade do students demonstrate independence in learning?***

I don't think there is any specific grade that one can identify as the grade in which they become independent learners. As kids get older and advance through school and life, it's only natural that they'll need to become more independent. As our children progress through lower school, middle school, high school, college, and beyond, they'll be increasingly expected to take charge of their own learning and manage their responsibilities. Actively making the effort to encourage independent learning from a young age is like removing the training wheels from a bike. As teachers and caregivers, it's important to know the right way to take the training wheels off while still providing adequate support when needed.

■ ***Is the moulding of students to become Independent Learners the responsibility of Schools alone? To what extent does a student's home affect this process?***

Parents know their children better than anyone else does. When they have a strong and respectful relationship with their child's school and teachers, they find themselves in a good position to acquire information that will help their children to get the most out of their education. Therefore, parents and teachers should work together to support their children's independent learning and well-being.



READ TO SUCCEED

FOR TEACHERS

EVOLVING EDUCATION - Shifting to a Learner-Centered Paradigm

- by **Dr. Katie Martin**

The book really dives into the shift to learner-centred learning. Not only does it explain what a learner-centred paradigm is, but offers ways to implement it in class. It is a much-needed read in our school systems today that are searching for new ways to encourage meaningful learning, assessment and drive student success.



FOR STUDENTS

THE SECRET GARDEN

- by **Frances H. Burnett**

(8 to 15 yrs)- After losing both of her parents, 10-year-old Mary Lennox is sent from her home in India to live in her uncle's bleak manor on the Yorkshire Moors. Bored one day, she explores her uncle's grand estate and comes across an old key that opens the door to a hidden garden and ends up discovering the magic of kindness.

■ *What is your view on some people's notion that boarding schools are better for promoting independence among Learners vis-a-vis regular day schools?*

Boarding school children are often independent and self-reliant as they have to solve their problems on their own. They become more responsible when they live away from parents. Boarding schools focus on nurturing smart individuals of tomorrow by exposing them to routine and challenging tasks at an early stage in life. That said, I don't think Boarding schools are necessarily the answer to every situation. Parents play an intrinsic role in the development of independent traits in their offspring. We don't and cannot live in isolation, permanently separated from the family which constitutes the basic unit of society. Perhaps the solution lies in helping parents realise the value of independent thought and action, so that a mutually beneficial role is played by them and the schools and the children are the ones who emerge as strong, independent thinkers who can function within the structure of the world they live in.

■ *Your final word.*

A very important part of independent thinking is to have a value-based framework within which children should learn. After all, learning is not independent of life. Giving children a strong spiritual foundation will provide them with the moral framework that they will need to operate within. Knowledge cannot be separated from values as knowledge needs to be applied in everyday life. This is what holistic education is all about – creating citizens for tomorrow whose decisions will be based on the common good, compassion and inclusion. As a society, we must encourage independence, so it is important to prepare students for the demands of the world. While traditional teaching methods may be best for showing that children are making progress, teachers can teach children to be independent learners and simultaneously ensure that the 'progress' does not slip away.

Is Your Child An **INDEPENDENT LEARNER**

Children are born with an innate sense of curiosity, but few develop sophisticated learning skills without guidance. We all desire our children to develop into **independent** students who can think for themselves, work by themselves and manage themselves.

The biggest impact of parents and educators on a child's success IS NOT achieved by just covering vast amounts of knowledge, learning styles and always having *fun*. It is all about teaching them **HOW** to become independent learners.

Dependent Learners prefer :

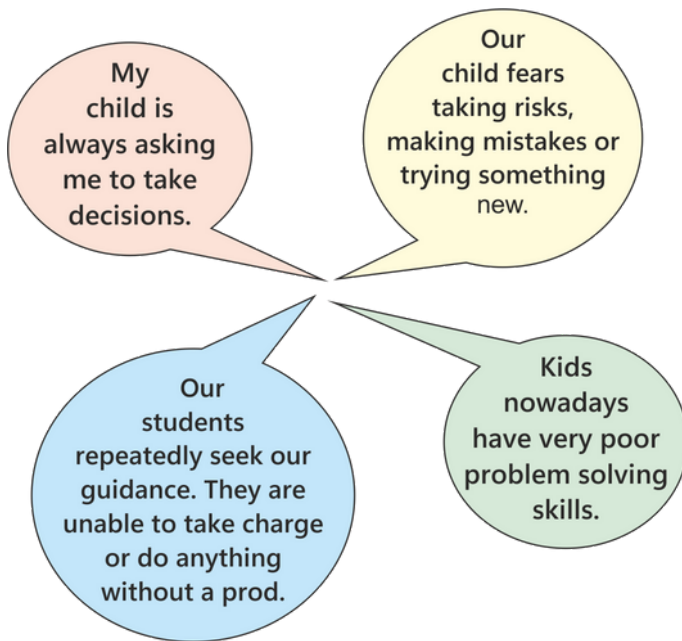
- Precise learning instructions
- Very clear assessment outcomes to serve as extrinsic motivation i.e. grades or rewards
- A teacher that guides / controls the learning; needs assistance from the teacher
- Teacher as a mentor / facilitator
- A social learning atmosphere
- Following teachers' instructions

Independent Learners prefer:

- Self-directed learning situations
- Choice of assessment methods
- Teacher as a mentor or facilitator
- Work with little or no supervision
- Non-traditional learning settings



HOW CAN WE PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE IN LEARNING?



Sound familiar, don't they? So the questions that arise are:

How Can We Help Students ...

- to become independent learners?
- to be curious, confident and capable?
- to be reflective, self-assess, critically evaluate, think towards a solution and correct themselves?
- to be self-motivated, take initiative, be responsible?
- identify their uniqueness - strengths / concerns, style of learning, pace, time of day, company?
- to live the ideal of being Lifelong-Learners?

Many parents are hesitant to allow their children to take decisions, make mistakes, or dwell on mishaps to learn from them. There is an underlying push to be perfect, to not 'think' but do as directed, fit in with the breed of cloned learners. Add to that the permanent adult-quick-fix to every challenge through the growing up years. Such experiences are detrimental to children's self-esteem, confidence, emotional well-being and independence.

Adults (parents or educators), keen to inculcate Independent Learning in their children, must first be willing to step back, let go of charge and be ready to offer greater levels of freedom to kids. At the same time, they must outline the sense of responsibility and consequences for their decisions / actions. And yes, there must be consistency in adhering to the plan and seeing consequences through, without emotional twinges or bias or judgement.

Here are some *useful tips and guidelines* that parents and teachers can read about and see what works best for them:

Make Learning Objectives Clear:

this allows students to see what they need to focus on, and they will also be able to assess even if they have gained it subsequently or not.

Hold back Answers:

this allows them to explore, learn through the process of guessing, searching, deducting and arriving at the answer.

Teach attention-to-detail as a skill:

this helps them to independently review their work critically, in all aspects, and improve.

Offer Opportunities To Reflect On Learning:

to continuously be motivated to pause, reflect on their performance, become more self-driven, and to be aware of their strengths, weaknesses and progress they are making.

Emphasize literacy as a foundation of learning:

to help students see reading & writing not as disparate 'skills', but rather the foundation of almost all academic learning.

Encourage a growth mindset:

to help them to thrive on challenges, and not see failure as a way to describe themselves or stop doing something; rather as a springboard for growth and developing abilities.

Give Feedback On Learning:

providing individual feedback in an encouraging and sensitive way helps a student to grow the skills & talents required to reflect, self-correct and become more independent.

Students inspecting for themselves is at the very basis of learning. Their success depends on the level to which we allow their independence to grow, flourish and help them to stand apart as unique individuals, with a risk appetite, ready to learn from mistakes and the mind-set to rise up and move on even if they take a fall. If we are to prepare our kids for an uncertain future, then they must be empowered and prepared to rise to any situation with confidence.

Every child, or for that matter human being, has the inherent urge to succeed. They only need the confidence and the skills that would help them execute their task. The natural outcome from this is that the child would be able to learn independently, without any further fear of failure or punishment. It is thus the duty of every adult to help the child master the basic skills to such an extent that the child is able to control them independently, to shape his/her own unique learning experience. This is possible if we start early to make them Independent Learners - not just for lessons in school but for Lessons in Life!

RIB TICKLERS

Soon after the students returned to class after a PE session, all hot, sweaty and tired, the teacher asked them to use the washroom to freshen up and relieve themselves. One boy returned rather quickly, while the others took their time. On being asked how he had finished so early, the boy replied, "Ma'am I washed my face but I couldn't relieve myself. I think the battery in my gadget has died out ! "

MAGIC In The Class

STRATEGY: THINK-PAIR-SHARE



Think-Pair-Share (TPS) is a collaborative learning strategy where students work together to solve a problem or answer a question about an assigned reading.

T (Think): Teachers begin by asking a specific question about the text. Students "think" about what they know or have learned about the topic.

P (Pair): Each student should ideally be paired with another student or a small group.

S (Share): Students then share their thinking with their partner. Teachers expand the "share" into a whole-class discussion.

This strategy requires Students to:

- 1) **Think individually** about a topic or answer to a question
- 2) **Share ideas with one's classmates.** Discussing with a partner maximizes participation, focuses attention and engages students in comprehending the reading material.
- 3) **Share common findings** with the class.

To use this strategy Teachers can follow this plan:

- 1) Decide upon the text to be read and develop the set of questions or prompts that target key content concepts.
- 2) Describe the purpose of the strategy and provide guidelines for discussions. Model the procedure to ensure that students understand how to use the strategy.
- 3) Monitor and support students as they work through the activity.

This strategy can be further expanded into a **Read-Write-Pair-Share** activity- **Read** the suggested article, **Write** about the central idea as it stands out to you, **Pair up & Share** with your partner first and then share with the whole class.

for 30 seconds	turn to your neighbor	with the whole class
for 1 minute	walk across the room	with another group
during class	group size = 2	verbally
before class	group size = 3 or 4	in writing
THINK	PAIR	SHARE
Ask students to respond to a question independently.	Have students compare answers in small groups.	Ask students to share their work with the class.
with pen and paper or a laptop	come to consensus	via polling software
in writing	agree to disagree	via whiteboard
as you doodle	explain your reasoning	class discussion
	share your opinion	time for telling

For the Teacher's Day Special theme- BEING & BECOMING A GURU, send your contributions to - team@qedrak.com
An effective classroom strategy / class humour / vocab word / a featured article / book titles...

NALANDA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



On the 10th of August, 2022 Team QEDRAK conducted a special leadership session for the Director, Principals & Senior Coordinators of this ICSE school, based out of Vadodara city. QEDRAK's popular and much sought-after "Implementing NEP 2020" workshop is being continually held in schools across various Boards and locales. The systematic coverage of the NEP highlights along with the QEDRAK Templates to assist schools in detailed planning for NEP implementation, helped the Nalanda team to become aware of the ways in which their school would see change - in the academic structure, day to day function & deliverables for all stakeholders.

SACRED HEART SCHOOL



Sacred Heart School (Siliguri) is a co-ed residential school affiliated to the CISCE board. The school has been associated with Team QEDRAK for over a year now. Beginning with online teacher training sessions way back in APRIL 2021, the association has come a long way in empowering the Sacred Heart School family of teachers with systematically planned and progressing TL practices and pedagogical approaches. In March 2022, Team QEDRAK conducted offline full-day workshops over 3 days.

Each day began with an energiser, followed by training- with videos, lectures, hands-on activities, group work, individual reflections & templates.

All QEDRAK workshops, since 2021, have been supported by hand-holding sessions over subsequent weeks, to ensure successful customisation for the school & implementation in the classroom.

