



5 Reasons why your school may not be aligned to the Future of Work

Before we address the question of whether most schools are aligned to the future of work, we need to mull over a few questions ourselves. These questions are – How different is the world today from the world we grew up in and how much do you think the world will change in the next 20 years? As you rise in the workplace hierarchy or progress, how does the proportion of familiar versus unfamiliar tasks or challenges that present themselves to you change? How much of your time as a leader goes into people management and coaching versus task execution? How often do you find yourself struggling to find people with the right skills and attitudes to do the jobs that you need support with?

If you have pondered on the above questions then, it is very likely that you would agree that the world is going to be an unfamiliar place when our children step into the workplace. Mckinsey says that, the pace of change of the Fourth Industrial Revolution will be 10 times, the scale 300 times and the impact 3000 times of the First Industrial Revolution. Secondly, how nimble and adaptable our children are and their ability to decode emotions and manage relationships is going to be key to their success. And thirdly, there is already a gaping skill gap that will only widen if we shut our eyes to the most logical outcomes of the changes around us.

We keep hearing phrases like 21st-century skills, future of jobs or work, machines taking over mechanical jobs, etc. and some of us are already growing sceptical of these scripts dismissing them as nothing more than motivated fear-mongering. We often hear parents say “We did fine with the traditional education that we got and so will our children.” There is nothing less that we wish for all our children and we hope that they thrive and not just survive. But the 5 reasons why schools clearly need to re-evaluate their philosophy and pedagogy and align themselves better with the future of work is due to the growing importance of-

Social Intelligence- Empathy which is the ability to recognize someone’s emotions, to connect with their underlying feelings and the context behind their perspective, and to respond constructively to them is an intelligence that will be required more and more in a conflict-ridden world that our children will inherit. Low tolerance levels and polarization are realities that could have been averted if the education system of our generation and our predecessors had been more intentional about teaching socio-emotional skills and equip us with the right tools to handle our own emotions and our relationships better. In any arena perceptiveness, service-mindedness, negotiation skills, persuasive communication, and transparency are hallmarks of any great leader. Some of these skills used to be learned naturally when children grew up in larger families and communities but now that the world of the child is shrinking to a set of over-scheduled parents, a handful of non-virtual friends if

they are lucky and a screen that listens to all their commands there is an urgent need for an intentional socio-emotional curriculum. An SEL curriculum that helps children first connect with themselves and recognize and manage their own emotions and then handle their relationships in a constructive manner not succumbing to their patterns, is a necessity. This is not possible through a single period of value education in a week or a few hours spent with the less fortunate but needs a continuous, integrated approach. An approach that includes developing a culture of deep thinking and reflection, bringing attention to their feelings, having difficult conversations that question stereotypes and biases, and most of all giving children multiple opportunities to collaborate where they exercise their empathy muscles regularly. A competitive environment might have short-lived, tangible benefits in student life but the damage it causes, in the long run, cannot be overstated. It isolates the child leaving her bereft of finding joy in anybody else's happiness, it externalizes the benchmarks of achievement and saps the ability to trust and to bring in their fold divergent viewpoints. So, a school that intentionally keeps **socio-emotional learning** at the center of its curriculum and believes in fostering collaboration over competition is more aligned with what the future needs. The capacity to relate, to be able to build deep, meaningful and enduring relationships is essential to a fulfilling life.

Creative Intelligence- Creativity is an abstract term and by its nature, it means the ability to understand and handle abstractness that defies set patterns. And what cannot be predicted or defined is harder to program into a machine so it is likely to provide humans the edge or advantage over artificial intelligence at least in the foreseeable future. Machines with AI might become the obvious choice for a huge array of tasks as they not only minimize errors, are free of emotional and physical fatigue but are a lot easier to control. However, what they can't do is deep thinking that involves connecting bits of information to create a holistic perspective and complex problem solving that involves coming up with unusual ideas, strategies, and original solutions. Both these elements of creative intelligence, deep-thinking and problem-solving flourish only when provided the right environment and stimuli. This right environment comprises of presenting meaningful, authentic problems to students that they feel motivated to grapple with, applying their knowledge to arrive at workable and sustainable solutions. Exposing them to problems far removed from their lives or those they have not witnessed the impact of first hand, feeding them solutions that others came up with and then expecting one right answer from them, are hardly congenial conditions for creativity to thrive in. Students driven by purpose are the ones who persevere to bring on their best. Educators role is to set up the context, share a corpus of ideas, tools, and approaches that could be used and create a safe space for students to bounce off and discuss their ideas with the educator providing relevant and specific feedback along the way. The **Experiential, project-based pedagogy** followed by progressive schools like Heritage aims to develop this creative intelligence in children where they learn through meaningful projects embedded in real problems of the community around them and not merely use projects for showcasing their learning. The flexibility, variety, and higher order thinking incorporated in assessment tasks at Heritage also fosters creativity encouraging children to think out of the box and sometimes even without the box.

Design Thinking- We probably learnt about the design cycle quite late in our lives and might have used various elements of it without really knowing the framework. But imagine the power of this framework and the paradigm shift it can bring if we use it in its totality for approaching any problem, right from early years. Design thinking is rooted in service orientation and empathy and encompasses research skills, skills of comparative analysis, prototyping, presentation and incorporating inputs from self, peer and client evaluation for improving solutions for the target audience. The digital tools provide support at each step of this cycle from defining and researching the problem to finally creating a practical and efficient solution which could be a non-digital one as well. Design thinking is not limited to but supported by digital tools and technology and it is the design thinking approach that schools aligned with the future try to build in their students that is then applied in various domains and uses knowledge across multiple subject areas to come up with solutions.

Makers and Tinkering Labs provide spaces and the latest tools for students to create and test their prototypes and solutions and learn by doing and failing and redoing. Many traditional schools still view computer classes and labs as stand-alone spaces to learn coding or use applications without really applying them in the real sense where they remain consumers of technology rather than becoming its creators.

Literacy- Literacy should not be limited to the learning of syntax and semantics of a language like it is the case in most schools even today. As per UNESCO's definition of literacy- "It is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written (and visual) materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential and to participate fully in the wider society." There are many other definitions of literacy that are even broader in their scope which state that literacy should be viewed as an operating system and not a language as it is the interface between the back end and front end – the thoughts and feelings at the back end and their expression as the front end. The crux of this is that literacy is a powerful agent that will play an even more important role in the future and empowering our children with the skills to fully exploit this powerful agent to their advantage is crucial. This can be done when children engage with a variety of texts from early on and they are encouraged to make connections both within the text and beyond. When they are encouraged to express themselves and are given a voice. When they introduced to different genres and intents of writing and each one is modelled out and built on grade after grade. When they are given a clear rubric to assess their own writing, oration, and comprehension skills and they feel driven to create multiple drafts to improve their performance. And at the end of this when the child feels confident and is able to achieve what she set out to achieve with their piece whether it be a persuasive speech or a note of gratitude or a poster to drive awareness instead of regurgitating answers provided in a workbook or model paper. A lot of re-humanization also happens through literacy at Heritage where students are made to step into the shoes of different characters to feel their pain and struggles and study how characters develop and evolve and the contexts that define and shape their perspectives.

Skills and attitudes- Focus on students acquiring skills and the right attitudes and work ethics need to come into focus and prioritized over just learning content. This is not to say

that traditional systems of education do not impart any skills. There are certain skills like time management, discipline, and rote memorization that most children incidentally pick up while preparing for high stake examinations at least for those few years. Then there are also exam-taking skills that are explicitly taught in schools. But the skills that are to do with the actual application of the acquired knowledge still take a back seat in most schools and that is what is going to matter in the times to come as content as we know is already readily available. We are not implying that one should not learn any content but the intent to learn should be able to apply the content and not pass an exam. In numeracy for example is it just enough to ace algorithms by repetition or develop the skill to identify the underlying patterns and relationships between variables to be able to approach different kinds of problems with ease? How schools like Heritage encourage skill development is by involving the hands, heart, and head and all the senses of the child in learning and also by explicitly stating and working on the skills being targeted through each unit and lesson. Imparting skills is akin to teaching the child to fish rather than giving her the fish. Attitudes and work ethics is again not something left to chance by schools that want to prepare children for the 21st century as they need deliberate effort and time to be built and reinforced. The attitudes of being adaptive and nimble to take on the ever-changing contexts of the world around us and not remaining in a state of inertia, the attitude of gratitude and not taking our privileges for granted and the attitude of taking responsibility for what is happening around us rather than being blame shifters are some attitudes that need consistent work. Students are encouraged to reflect on their habits of work and learning and the ethics they exhibit while doing various tasks in schools like Heritage. There are rubrics and checklists for these aspects too and children use them from primary years itself so that they understand the importance of these aspects of their development and personality.

Heritage never loses sight of the larger purpose of education which is to prepare students to become proactive and engaged citizens of the world of the future. Its educators are committed to ignite the inner will that will propel children to fulfil their promise as social and creative beings by equipping them with the right knowledge and skills and, primarily, by seeding the right attitude. In a transformed ecosystem of education where learning is no longer confined to schools but available any time and any place, the school fulfils its commitment by deploying progressive methodologies and pedagogies as well as by bringing expanded opportunities for learning into the classroom.