

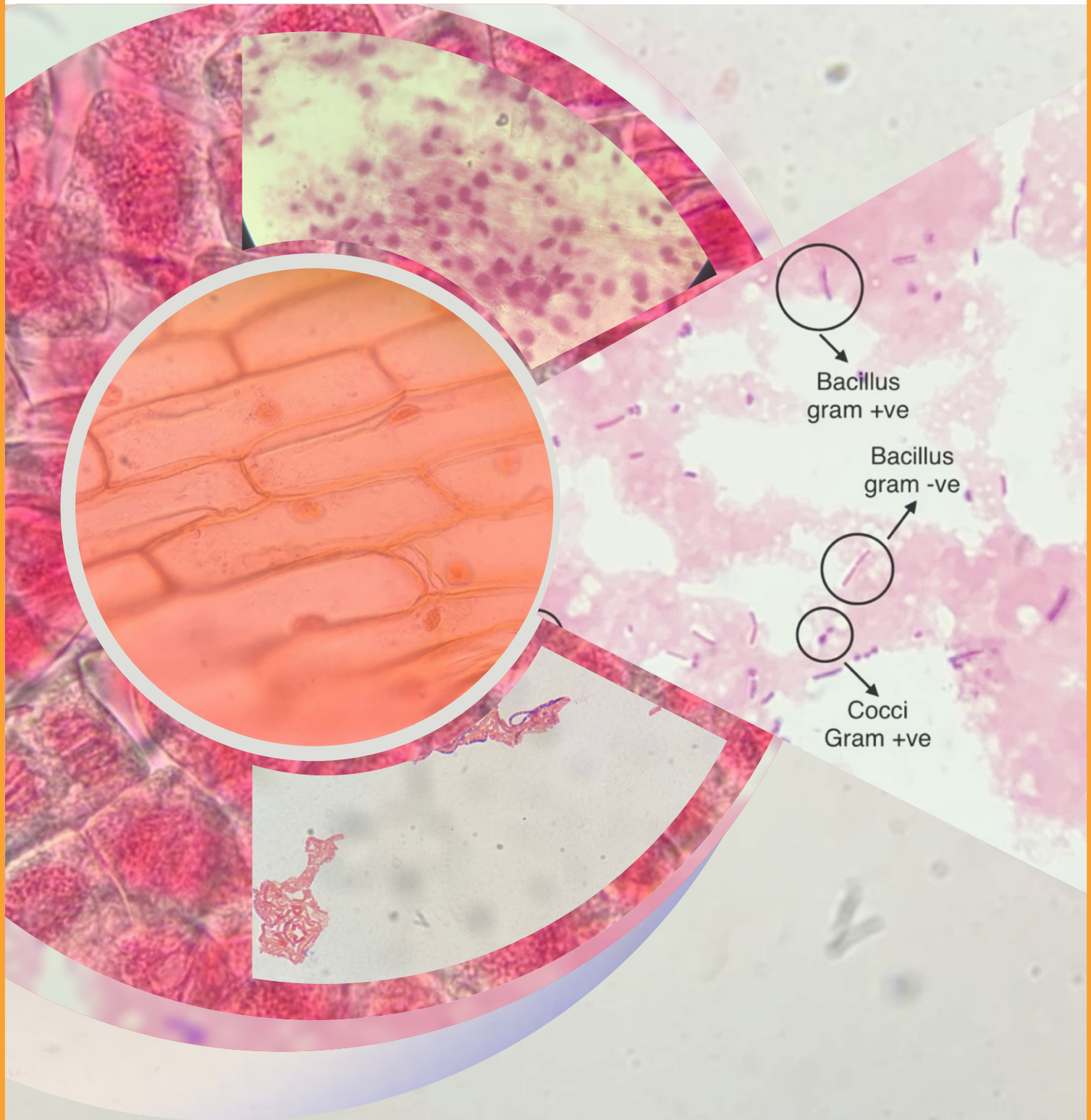
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The Education Newsletter



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Brainrot, Big Tech & Young Minds

Aging in a Digital World

Designing the Future

Rethinking UG Admissions Prep

Contents

COVER STORY

Brainrot, Big Tech, and the Battle for Young Minds
By Prerna Bansal

03

STUDENT'S Corner

The Future of Aging in a Digital World
By Anhad Goyal

04

YOUR Opinion MATTERS

Are Students Re-thinking UG Admissions Prep?
By Priyamvada Agarwal

07

SCHOOL Spotlight

In Conversation with Ms. Preethi Vickram
By Preethi Vickram

09

PARTNER Spotlight

**Beyond Career Choices:
Helping Young People Design Their Future**
By Shweta Khanna

10

UNIVERSITY Spotlight

**In the Quiet Classrooms of Kirori Mal,
I Learnt to Read the World**
By Shauryaveer Chandwani

05



Your Education Digest:
Snapshots of events that matter

11



Check your Orange Quotient (OQ)

12



We would like to invite our readers to participate in our exciting Photo Contest by sharing powerful moments that reflect learning, mentoring, and student life. The winning entry will be featured on the cover of our newsletter. Please send your entries to write@uconnectworld.com. Submissions must be in portrait format.

Meet the Photo Contest Winner

Eeksha Masand is a third-year BSc Psychology and Biology student at KREA University currently pursuing an internship at Manipal Hospital under Child Life Services. Through her studies, she enjoys exploring the connections between the brain, development, and mental health, while continually seeking opportunities to learn, grow, and deepen her understanding of the science behind human functioning.



These images capture different stages of mitosis observed in onion root tip cells during a laboratory experiment. The photographs highlight the progression of cell division, revealing the intricate processes that shape the growth and development of all organisms.



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COVER STORY

Brainrot, Big Tech and the Battle for Young Minds

By Prerna Bansal,
IEC & Founder, Perna Bansal & Co



What viral trends, endless scrolling, and digital childhoods reveal about the mental health of today's students.

Who could forget the sheer pandemonium that erupted in the classroom last year, the second the page was turned to page 67? While we were left pondering this bizarre, viral trend, it was just another day of brainrot for our students.

A Generation Shaped by Screens

Overexposed to screens during the pandemic, and devoid of social bonding milestones in their formative years, today's teens have spiralled into brainrot faster than ever. Nonsensical songs and games are developing into a genre of their own, where made-up terms and characters exist with no purpose. It is no wonder, then, that trends like "6-7" have caught on like fire. Living in a world where everything moves at warp speed, they naturally gravitate toward trends that don't require any overthinking. As Gen Alpha would say, "Chat, we're cooked".

Rules, restrictions, and screen-time trackers all have their place, but none of them can replace an adult who shows up, asks genuine questions, and listens.

Understanding the Psychology Behind the Trend

To dive deeper into the screen habits and mental health of young adults today, I sat down with clinical and counselling psychologist Ms. Millin Sangha Gujral in my podcast, "Out of Syllabus".

One of the first things Millin addressed is something many parents misread as dramatics: kids today genuinely feel more. While we tend to read into Gen Alpha's emotional intensity, we need to acknowledge that our teenagers are digital natives. Today, with smartphones and tablets becoming the norm for even toddlers, navigating multiple apps while being rewarded with frequent dopamine hits is the only world they've known.

Designed for Addiction

But the world was intentionally designed this way, and we had no clue. In a landmark trial that concluded earlier this year, Big Tech was sued by 20-year-old Kelsey, aka KGM, who alleged that Alphabet and Meta built their short-form content algorithms on addiction psychology. Not only did they know, but they actively advocated for them to be distributed as "ed-tech tools" to our children.



Stop overscheduling your child's time, and instead build "boredom sessions" into their routine.

As the trial unfolded, evidence tumbled out of the closet at an alarming speed and scale. Whistleblowers and researchers from Instagram, Facebook and YouTube turned up and spoke about the alarms they raised while developing new features. In what will be one of the most historical wins of our times, the jury indicted

Alphabet and Meta on all the charges brought against them, ruling that the companies sanctioned the "infinite scroll" and algorithms, knowing exactly how addictive they would become. In parallel, governments began banning the use of social media for under-16s across the world.

Beyond Bans and Restrictions

But does banning social media for teens solve all problems? Because it is indeed a devil that none of us can rid ourselves of from our own lives, either. Parents who scroll through their phones for hours while simultaneously policing their children's screen time are sending a message that speaks louder than words. The culture of doom scrolling belongs to everyone in the house, and Millin says that unless we are willing to curb our own dopamine cravings, strict screen time policies for our children will fail.

Teaching Resilience, Not Avoidance

Teen years are synonymous with rebellion. According to Millin, banning apps does not teach a teenager how to handle rejection, loneliness, or anxiety. Instead, it removes an existing outlet of self-expression without offering an alternative. Rules, restrictions, and screen-time trackers all have their place, but none of them can replace an adult who shows up, asks genuine questions, and listens.

To tackle the brainrot pandemic, parents can start small. Stop overscheduling your child's time, and instead build "boredom sessions" into their routine. It's harder to do that when everyone else is typing away furiously on a group chat, and boredom feels like punishment. So bring a group of like-minded parents together, and schedule this time together for your children.

As for the educators, we have a tall task at hand. In a digital-first world, we are tasked with a lot more than being our students' education and career counsellors. By recognising the absence of connection as the root of brainrot, we can offer our students a stronger emotional connection, engage with them more deeply and bridge the generation gap by tapping into their true "goated" potential.



The Future of Aging in a Digital World

By Anhad Goyal,
Computer Science Student at Lancaster University, UK
CAAS 2021

How technology is reshaping health, independence, social connections, and lifelong learning for older adults.



**STUDENT'S
Corner**

In today's world, as technology becomes increasingly integrated into everyday life, the experience of aging is expected to differ significantly from that of previous generations. The digital world has already influenced many aspects of older adults' lives, including healthcare, communication, employment, education, and social relationships.

Technology and the Rise of Preventive Healthcare

Technology has had a particularly significant influence on healthcare, greatly impacting both life expectancy and the aging experience. According to data from Our World in Data, life expectancy in the early 1900s was around 32 years, while by 2023 it had risen to approximately 75 years. Modern healthcare is increasingly moving away from reactive interventions and toward proactive monitoring and preventive strategies. The market is already filled with wearable devices and smartwatches equipped with AI-powered assistants that continuously monitor vital signs, particularly for older adults. As these technologies continue to advance, they may enable older adults to live longer, healthier, and more independent lives.

Technology has fundamentally transformed the way older adults interact with family, friends, and wider communities.

Staying Connected in a Digital Society

At the same time, technology has fundamentally transformed the way older adults interact with family, friends, and wider communities. With the emergence of Google and social media platforms, communities and families now communicate through digital networks more than ever before. Social media has transformed many aspects of modern life. Furthermore, a significant portion of the elderly population has embraced digital companionship, utilizing online media streaming and conversational AI assistants. While these technologies can help reduce feelings of loneliness, digital connections should complement rather than replace human interaction. Despite efforts to adapt to new technologies, some older adults may eventually struggle to keep pace with rapid technological change, thereby increasing their risk of social isolation.

Therefore, while digital communication offers many benefits, maintaining meaningful human relationships will remain essential for healthy aging.

Retirement may also become more flexible as digital tools enable lifelong learning. According to the World Economic Forum, many older adults increasingly wish to continue working, learn new

skills, and contribute to the economy. Online courses and digital education have existed for years, but their adoption accelerated significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many adults began learning new skills or improving existing ones to remain active in the workforce. As a result, older adults are likely to remain active contributors to society and the growing silver economy.

The Challenge of the Digital Divide

Despite these advancements, the digital divide remains one of the greatest challenges facing older adults. Technology can only improve aging if older individuals are able to access and use it effectively. Many digital devices require a certain level of digital literacy, and some have complex user interfaces that can be difficult to understand. Additionally, online scams have increased rapidly, with fraudsters often targeting older adults to steal money or personal information. While many of these challenges are social and ethical in nature, the future of digital aging depends on the responsible use of technology. Health-monitoring systems collect highly sensitive personal data, and concerns regarding privacy remain significant in today's digital world. Unless these barriers are addressed, many older adults may be unable to fully benefit from the opportunities offered by digital technologies.

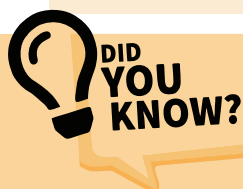
Smart Solutions for Independent Living

In response to these issues, next-generation technologies are specifically being tailored to better accommodate the needs of older adults. AI-powered health assistants are being developed to help doctors identify diseases, analyse X-ray scans, and continuously monitor patients. Smart homes are also becoming more advanced, featuring built-in intelligent systems capable of responding to voice commands, monitoring household conditions, and even notifying users when products are nearing their expiration dates. Such innovations demonstrate how technology may help older adults maintain independence and improve their quality of life.

Technology can only improve aging if older individuals are able to access and use it effectively.

Building an Inclusive Future of Aging

The future of aging will not be determined by technology alone, but by how inclusively societies design and deploy digital systems. While digital innovations offer unprecedented opportunities to improve health, communication, and independence, they also raise challenges related to accessibility, privacy, and social inclusion. If access, affordability, and human dignity remain central priorities, technology can transform aging from a period of dependency into one of continued participation, learning, and well-being.



Japan, where nearly one-third of the population is aged 65 or older, is at the forefront of developing technologies for healthy aging. Companies such as Toyota are creating robotic assistive technologies that help older adults with mobility and daily activities, while broader investments in AI, robotics, and smart-home solutions are enabling seniors to live more independently for longer.





The SAT Advantage: A Smarter Route Through India's Admissions Maze

By Priyamvada Agarwal, Founder,
Educator & Test Prep Trainer - Education & You



**The SAT is providing students
with a streamlined approach
that supports both domestic
and international aspirations**

Undergraduate admissions in India have been an intense process for decades: planning starts as early as Grade 9 with long study hours, scattering across multiple entrance exams, and a relentless focus on volume-based preparation. Major entrance exams such as JEE Main and NEET are not only the defining features of access to higher education in India but also a culture in itself with a vast syllabus, fierce competition, and a system with its own flaws. However, with the emergence of new - age universities in India, something interesting is beginning to change. A broader perspective of thoughts and alternative pathways are being explored.

As the admissions environment has grown more complex and crowded, the SAT exam has quietly started to emerge as an alternative that upends how students prepare; not by adding another test to the list, but by changing the game entirely.

To understand this shift, we must first look at the numbers.

- JEE Main sees over 12–14 lakh students every year
- NEET-UG has crossed 23 lakh aspirants annually

But the important question is, how many actually make it through?

- Only about 2.5 lakh students qualify for JEE Advanced, with roughly 16,000–17,000 seats in IITs
- NEET offers approximately 1.1 lakh MBBS seats, with far fewer government seats

This suggests that a vast majority of students, despite putting in years of preparation, do not reach their intended outcome.

This is not criticism, it is the REALITY.

In India, preparation for JEE and NEET is not just rigorous; it is deeply ingrained in the academic culture. For many, it begins immediately after Class 10. What follows is a highly structured, two-year (or more) cycle of coaching, testing, and repetition. Over this time, something critical happens: school learning takes a backseat, and exam preparation becomes the primary identity. At age 15 or 16, some students are often made to commit to a career path between engineering or medicine, and thereafter have to spend years preparing for it.

But what if tomorrow their interests evolve or they want to develop a niche skill rather than be conventional?

But WE, as the system, rarely allow for that PAUSE and RECONSIDER.

The preparation cycle is so intensive that stepping away feels like losing momentum. Many students continue on a path not necessarily because it aligns with their interests, but because they have already invested too much into it, both in time and costs. Today, a typical student is navigating a maze: The Problem with "More Exams, More Pressure". While working around multiple entrance exams, it is observed that most overlap in syllabus, while they differ significantly in format, pattern, and timelines. Making every student study the same concepts multiple times in different ways causes the preparation to become fragmented, and thus the focus shifts from learning to managing exams.

This is where fatigue sets in, not just academic, but cognitive.

Furthermore, the number of students in India taking the SAT test is significantly smaller, estimated in the range of 1–1.5 lakh students annually, though this varies year to year. At first glance, this may seem negligible compared to JEE, NEET, or CUET. But the difference is not just in scale, it is in approach. Most importantly, instead of demanding a separate preparation ecosystem, it aligns closely with what students are already being taught in school since grade 6 onwards, for English and Mathematics. Therefore, a powerful shift happens: making preparation more integrated, rather than an additional burden.



YOUR OPINION MATTERS *Contd.*

One of the most intriguing aspects of the SAT is its efficiency. This way, the student no longer feels like he/she is preparing for “two different worlds,” and at the same time, preparation becomes organic and consistent, rather than last-minute and intense.

Today, most students and parents are juggling multiple coaching classes and study plans to prepare for various exams, whereas the SAT exam offers a single, skill-based prep pathway. The reason is that the focus here is not about covering more material but about sharpening core skills: reading comprehension, grammar skills, data interpretation, and mathematical application.

Therefore, for many students, this means fewer but more productive study hours, less duplication in preparation, and a stronger awareness of their academic strengths. The time and mental space gained can then be invested in extracurricular pursuits, profile-building, subject exploration, and long-term planning. When a student does not have to constantly maintain an exam calendar and switch between different exam formats and preparation styles, the impact of the test performance is bigger and more meaningful. Furthermore, beyond academics, there is a more subtle but equally important impact: the mental burden during the admissions process.

It is important to NOTE that the SAT is NOT easier; it’s just that it is more focused, making focus itself the most valuable resource.

Another aspect considered in India for these exams is that cost plays a significant role in decision-making. Many families hesitate to explore alternative pathways or private universities due to perceived expenses, often assuming traditional routes are more economical.

But this comparison is rarely complete because we forget to factor:

- Years of coaching
- Multiple attempts
- Opportunity cost
- Emotional and mental investment

When these are thought deeply, the equation becomes more nuanced, alongside the financial concerns, which are real and valid. But what is equally important is to adapt and so a shift in

mindset is needed! Not every alternative is expensive. Not every traditional route is simple. It’s important to be clear: the SAT is not a replacement for exams like JEE Main or NEET, as these exams serve specific purposes and remain essential for certain career paths. It is indeed a myth that the SAT is only needed for international admissions; its growing acceptance across Indian universities is changing that perception. As of June 2026, 59 private Indian universities accept SAT scores for their undergraduate admissions, and a few more accept them as an alternative on a case-by-case basis, making it a viable pathway not just for students looking abroad but also for those seeking options within India.

It is indeed a myth that the SAT is only needed for international admissions; its growing acceptance across Indian universities is changing that perception.

This dual relevance is significant.

So, now it gives students and parents flexibility, the ability to keep both domestic and international options open without doubling their effort. In the current geopolitical world crisis, uncertainties are common, making outcomes very risky and unpredictable; thus, this flexibility is a game-changer. This is because a student has a more stable environment in their study routines, is less anxious about jumping to and from question patterns, and can prepare with more confidence and rigorous mock practices. But this doesn’t eliminate stress—it makes it more manageable.

That being said, the SAT is a strategic alternative.

As an educator having been in this space for over 15 years, and watching the education space evolve rapidly, my perspective is that we need to stop asking students to simply work harder, and instead start helping them to work smarter, even if it feels uncomfortable. Success is not just about clearing an exam; it is about choosing a path that aligns with the child’s strengths, interests, and future goals.

And increasingly, this may not come from doing more but from doing things differently.



If you’re an educator who has a perspective or insight to share, we’d love to hear from you.
Please write to us at write@uconnectworld.com

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors.



In Conversation with Ms. Preethi Vickram of Tapas Progressive School



तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु

At University Connection, we engage with visionary thinkers from around the globe who are redefining the landscape of education. By capturing the essence of their ideas and insights, we serve as a bridge connecting all stakeholders in the education ecosystem. UCONNECT would be incomplete without the valuable contributions of such trailblazers.

In today's school spotlight, we are honoured to feature the Tapas Progressive School, Bengaluru.

This is a conversation with Ms. Preethi Vickram,
Entrepreneur and Founder, Tapas Progressive School, Bengaluru.

What inspired you to establish Tapas Progressive School?

I established Tapas Progressive School in 2020 with a single goal: to put learning, and thereby, destiny, directly back in the hands of children. With a focus on learning by doing (Project-Based Learning), the school blends domains of knowledge into projects that contextualize knowledge and enable real-world problem-solving.

What is the mission and desired outcome of the Tapas learning model?

At Tapas, our mission is to create lifelong learners in teachers, children, and parents alike. The outcome we seek is a committed community of responsible global citizens who have child-like curiosity, sage-like wisdom, and bee-like energy for a better tomorrow.

What are the five Panchdhaatus that form the foundation of Tapas Progressive School?

Tapas centres on five principles, or Panchdhaatus:

- Astithva:** Nurturing each child's identity through the right values, without comparison.
- Chakra:** A pedagogy where the learners are at the centre, the axle of the wheel and spokes.
- Prana:** Providing an environment through carefully and intentionally designed spaces where learning can thrive.
- Tatva:** Inculcating nature, harmony, self-awareness and real-world context in learning.
- Ananda:** Infusing joy in all spheres of school life.

What is the Academy for Teaching Excellence, and what are its objectives?

Tapas Progressive School has collaborated with Teacher Ink, a teaching professional development platform, to establish the Academy for Teaching Excellence. Together, we hope to uplift teaching standards through programs emphasizing structured training, practical exposure, and a progressive learning mindset.

How are you extending the impact of Tapas beyond the school itself?

Through the Academy for Teaching Excellence, I am positioning Tapas not just as a school for students, but as a centre of research and development for the teaching profession. The hope is that the Tapas model can be emulated by others seeking to implement project-based learning.

What role do research and global collaborations play in your work?

Our efforts are bolstered by my continued doctoral research in School Leadership and my work with global platforms such as the LEGO Foundation, OPPI, and NAEYC.

How is Tapas preparing for the future of higher education guidance?

The school is transitioning into a fully operational college counseling framework in 2026 in collaboration with University Connection. This will prove whether the high-autonomy, project-based environment of Tapas can successfully interface with the traditional requirements of global higher education.

How would you describe your contribution to education through Tapas Progressive School?

Through my work at Tapas Progressive School, I have sought to bridge large-scale franchising with deep-impact progressive schooling and create a template for 21st-century education in India. I continue to challenge the conventional textbook rote-learning model, proving that schools can indeed be environments that fuel curiosity and anchor values.

Could you tell us about your professional journey in education?

I bring considerable experience as a parenting coach, leadership mentor, educator, and edupreneur, having founded Tapas Education and hosted and supported numerous education-based conferences across India. I have been a Master Franchisee for the Podar Education Network since 2004 and am currently the Master Franchisee for 62 ECCE centres across Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.

What recognition have you received for your contributions to education?

For my efforts in promoting the Leadership Initiative for Educators (LIFE), I was honoured with the Times Power Women 2019 award.

- **Home Town:** Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.
- **Role Model Educator(s):** My philosophy is a synthesis of multiple figures including John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and J. Krishnamurti.
- **A Teacher Remembered Fondly:** Mrs. Roopa Sarathy, whose teaching sparked a love for Mathematics.
- **What the World Needs Most Today:** Resilience, meaningful connection, and the ability to respond (responsibility) as freedom rather than a burden.
- **An Overlooked Super Power Among Students:** Child-like curiosity and Emotional Intelligence (EQ), which are often treated as secondary to IQ in traditional settings.



PARTNER Spotlight

Beyond Career Choices: Helping Young People Design Their Future

By Shweta Khanna,
Certified "Designing Your Life" Facilitator

**Preparing students not just for tomorrow's jobs,
but for a lifetime of adaptation and growth.**

A decade ago, the question facing most students was relatively straightforward:

"What career do I want to pursue?"

Today, the question is far more complex.

Students are growing up in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) world, where careers are evolving faster than ever, artificial intelligence is reshaping industries, and many of tomorrow's jobs have yet to be created. The student canvas is a blend of opportunities along with a growing sense of uncertainty. Viewed from the lens of a High school student, there is pressure to make decisions about subjects, careers, universities, and life paths at an age when they are still discovering who they are.

Parents worry about whether their children are making the "right" choices. Educators strive to prepare students for an uncertain future. Counsellors guide students through increasingly complex academic and career pathways.

Yet a fundamental question often remains unexplored:

- How do young people learn to navigate uncertainty itself?
- From Choosing a Future to Designing One

For decades, career guidance has focused on helping students identify interests, strengths, and suitable pathways. This remains an essential part of a student's journey. However, today's scenario demands an additional capability—the ability to adapt, experiment, learn, and intentionally design one's future. This is the philosophy behind **Designing Your Future (DYF)**, a transformative programme inspired by Stanford University's renowned *Designing Your Life* framework. Developed from over fifteen years of research at Stanford's Life Design Lab, the methodology applies the principles of Design Thinking to life, education, and career decisions.



Rather than asking students to discover a single "perfect" career, the programme encourages them to explore multiple possible futures, build self-awareness, challenge limiting beliefs, and develop the confidence to take meaningful action.

The goal is not simply to help students choose a college, but rather to help them develop the mindset to navigate life.

Why Students Need More Than Information

Many students today have access to abundant information. They can research universities, compare courses, watch career videos, and connect with professionals online. What they often lack is not information, but clarity.

Questions such as:

- Who am I becoming?
 - What gives me energy and purpose?
 - What possibilities excite me?
 - How do I make decisions when there is no clear answer?
 - How do I move forward despite uncertainty?
- cannot be answered through information alone.

They require reflection, experimentation, and guided exploration.

DYF provides a structured process through which students learn to understand themselves more deeply while developing a practical toolkit for navigating life's transitions.

A Complement to Career Counselling, Not a Replacement

One common misconception is that programmes like DYF compete with traditional counselling. In reality, they serve different but complementary purposes. Career counsellors significantly help students understand academic pathways, university options, admission requirements, career trends, and decision-making frameworks. Designing Your Future focuses on helping students develop the inner capacity required to make those decisions more confidently and authentically.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT *Contd.*

If counselling answers:
"What are my options?"

DYF helps students answer:

"Who am I, and how do I approach my future?"

Together, they create a far more holistic developmental journey.

A student who understands their values, strengths, motivations, and aspirations is better equipped to engage meaningfully in career counselling conversations and make informed educational choices.

What Makes the Approach Different?

The Designing Your Future journey guides students through four interconnected phases:

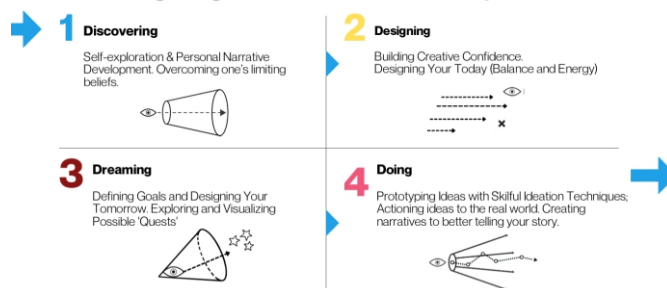
- **Discovering:**
Students explore their personal narratives, strengths, experiences, and limiting beliefs.
- **Designing:**
They develop creative confidence, build awareness of energy and balance, and begin viewing challenges through a designer's mindset.
- **Dreaming:**
Students envision multiple possible futures instead of becoming attached to a single outcome.
- **Doing:**
They prototype ideas, test possibilities, and convert aspirations into action.

This progression reflects one of the programme's most powerful ideas: You do not think your way into a better future. You design your way into it through action.



To learn more about Designing Your Future and its application in schools and student development programmes, write to skh10jan@gmail.com. Discover how students can build the mindset and skills needed to design meaningful futures in a rapidly changing world.

The Designing Your Future Journey



Why Parents Are Paying Attention

Many parents witness their children struggling with pressure, comparison, perfectionism, and fear of making mistakes. The instinctive response is often to seek answers, yet the future rarely offers certainty. What young people need is resilience, adaptability, self-awareness, and the confidence to navigate ambiguity.

Parents who have engaged with life-design approaches often find that students become more proactive, reflective, and open to exploring possibilities rather than becoming trapped by fear of failure. The goal is not simply to help students choose a college, but rather to help them develop the mindset to navigate life.

A New Opportunity for Schools

Schools worldwide are increasingly recognising that future readiness extends beyond academic achievement.

Students need capabilities such as:

- Self-awareness
- Creative confidence
- Decision-making
- Adaptability
- Purpose exploration
- Resilience
- Narrative building and communication

These competencies align strongly with the aspirations of modern education systems, including the vision of holistic development emphasised by educational reforms globally.

Designing Your Future offers schools an experiential framework for nurturing these capabilities while supporting students through one of the most important periods of identity formation and life planning.

The Future Belongs to Designers

The students who thrive in the future may not necessarily be those who have every answer today. They will be those who learn how to ask better questions, embrace uncertainty, experiment with possibilities, and continuously redesign their paths as the world evolves. In that sense, the most important skill may no longer be choosing a future; It may be learning how to design one. And perhaps that is the real promise of education, not merely preparing students for the future, but empowering them to create it.

If you're an educator who has a perspective or insight to share, we'd love to hear from you.
Please write to us at write@uconnectworld.com

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In the Quiet Classrooms of Kirori Mal, I Learnt to Read the World

By Shauryaveer Chandwani,
Economics Honours Student at University of Delhi, KMC,
CAAS 2022, UC Peer Mentor 2026

Looking back on the people, places, and moments that transformed education into understanding.



There is a peculiar moment that every student experiences, though very few recognise it when it happens. It is the moment when a place quietly stops being unfamiliar. The corridors no longer feel like corridors but pathways of routine. The security guard at the gate begins to recognise your face. The chai vendor knows your order before you speak. The walk from the Metro station becomes instinctive. The classrooms that once seemed intimidating become spaces where opinions are formed, challenged, dismantled and rebuilt. Somewhere between the first attendance sheet and the final examination, an institution becomes a home. That, to me, is Delhi University.

Arriving with Questions

When I entered Kirori Mal College to pursue B.A. (Hons.) Economics, I carried with me what most eighteen-year-olds do: a carefully packed bag of aspirations and a far larger suitcase of uncertainties. Like thousands who arrive in Delhi every year, I imagined university as a destination where answers would be given. Instead, I found a place that asked better questions.

What does success mean?
What kind of citizen do you want to become?
What responsibilities accompany privilege?
Can education exist beyond classrooms?

These were questions no examination paper ever asked, yet they defined my years more profoundly than any academic syllabus.

A Campus Built on Conversations

Delhi University has often been described through statistics: its colleges, rankings, enrolment numbers, distinguished alumni and historical significance. Yet none of these explain why generations continue to remember it long after graduation. Universities are never merely collections of buildings. They are repositories of conversations. North Campus is, perhaps, India's most democratic classroom. Within a few square kilometres coexist hundreds of ambitions. Future economists share benches with aspiring artists. Entrepreneurs debate policy with political science students. Musicians rehearse beside aspiring civil servants. Engineers preparing for management entrances discuss ideas with historians researching archives. Every conversation carries the possibility of altering one's perspective. The greatest lectures I attended often began after the official ones had ended.



When Economics Became Human

Economics, as a discipline, teaches one to identify incentives, analyse choices and understand scarcity. At Kirori Mal College, however, the subject gradually transformed into something far more humane. Markets were no longer abstract mechanisms; they became stories of livelihoods. Development ceased to be a chapter in a textbook and became a question of dignity. Inequality was no longer represented merely through the Gini coefficient but through lived realities encountered across the city; Delhi itself became an extension of the curriculum. No classroom can fully

explain urban economics until one has watched Old Delhi awaken before sunrise, seen Connaught Place transform through the day, observed daily commuters negotiating the Metro, or walked through neighbourhoods where prosperity and deprivation stand separated by little more than a road.

The city demanded observation. The university taught interpretation. Together, they became a full system of education. Yet education at Delhi University has never been confined to academics. It resides equally in committee rooms where events somehow come together despite impossible timelines. It lives in placement cell meetings that stretch late into the evening, in student society rehearsals where perfection is pursued with remarkable sincerity, and in festivals that transform ordinary college grounds into vibrant celebrations of youth and culture.

There is a peculiar optimism that belongs only to university campuses. Everyone is building something. Someone is preparing for the Civil Services. Someone else is designing a startup. Another is writing poetry that may never be published but deserves to be. A friend is rehearsing for theatre while another spends evenings photographing sunsets across the Ridge. Nobody knows whose dream will eventually materialise. Yet everyone applauds everyone else's attempt. That generosity of spirit is perhaps Delhi University's most underrated lesson.

The Spirit of Kirori Mal College

Kirori Mal College occupies a distinctive place within this larger ecosystem. Its reputation extends beyond academic excellence. There exists an unmistakable sense of belonging that is difficult to articulate but immediately recognisable to anyone who has walked through its gates. The lawns become informal seminar rooms. The canteen becomes an arena for debates that effortlessly move from macroeconomics to cricket, cinema, geopolitics and philosophy. Friendships are formed not because people are alike but because they are willing to listen to one another.

In hindsight, it is these conversations that remain. Not the marks obtained. Not the attendance percentages. Not even the semester schedules that once seemed all-consuming. Memory has an unusual way of editing our lives. Years from now, I doubt that I will remember every econometrics model I studied or every theorem I proved in mathematical economics. Instead, I shall remember waiting outside examination halls with classmates pretending to remain calm while collectively revising everything we should have studied weeks earlier.

I shall remember monsoon afternoons when rain transformed the campus into something almost cinematic. I shall remember rushing from one society meeting to another, convinced each responsibility mattered immensely and perhaps, in those moments, it did. I shall remember professors who demanded intellectual honesty before intellectual brilliance. I shall remember classmates whose ideas challenged assumptions I had unknowingly carried for years. Above all, I shall remember discovering that education begins where certainty ends.

UNIVERSITY SPOTLIGHT *Contd.*

Diversity as a Daily Lesson

One of Delhi University's greatest strengths lies in its diversity not as an institutional slogan but as a lived reality. Every classroom gathers India in miniature. Different languages coexist naturally. Festivals become collective celebrations rather than individual observances. Perspectives shaped by distant geographies encounter one another daily. Through these interactions, one gradually realises that disagreement need not produce division and that understanding often begins with listening. This lesson feels especially significant today.

We inhabit an age increasingly characterised by certainty, quick opinions, immediate judgements and carefully curated echo chambers. Universities exist to resist precisely this tendency. They compel us to encounter unfamiliar ideas, uncomfortable questions and people whose experiences differ fundamentally from our own. That discomfort is not a flaw. It is education. If I have changed during my years at Kirori Mal College, it is not because I accumulated information. Information is abundant. Transformation is rare.

The university taught me to think before speaking, to question before concluding, and to remain intellectually curious even when answers appeared convenient.

Leadership Beyond Titles

Outside classrooms, opportunities emerged that reshaped my understanding of leadership. Working with student organisations, collaborating on projects, engaging with professionals from diverse industries, and taking ownership of responsibilities taught lessons no textbook could adequately capture. Leadership, I realised, is rarely about occupying the front row. More often, it is about ensuring others have the confidence to step into it.

The Value of Failure

Looking back now, I find myself grateful not only for achievements but equally for disappointments. The interview that did not go as planned. The competition that ended in defeat. The proposal that required endless revisions. The mistakes that appeared significant then but now seem necessary. Failure has an unusual generosity. It rarely offers comfort, but almost always offers clarity. Delhi University allows one the freedom to fail without surrendering the opportunity to begin again. Perhaps that is why

so many graduates speak of it with quiet affection. Not because their years were perfect. But because they were formative.

As I prepare to leave Kirori Mal College, I do so with the awareness that graduation is less an ending than a redistribution of responsibility. Universities cannot accompany their students indefinitely. Eventually, they trust them to carry forward the habits of inquiry, integrity and compassion cultivated within their walls. The degree I receive will certify my academic qualification. It cannot possibly certify everything else. It cannot measure friendships forged over countless conversations. It cannot quantify confidence discovered through uncertainty. It cannot record moments of self-doubt overcome through perseverance. It cannot capture the countless ordinary afternoons that quietly shaped an extraordinary chapter of life. Those remain beyond documentation.

A Tradition That Lives On

When future generations walk through the gates of Kirori Mal College, they will arrive with dreams different from mine and leave with stories entirely their own. That is the enduring beauty of institutions like Delhi University. Every batch inherits the same classrooms, the same trees, the same brick walls and the same sprawling campus. Yet each generation leaves behind an invisible layer of memory that enriches the place for those who follow.

I arrived believing I was joining one of India's finest universities. I leave understanding that I became part of something far greater than an academic institution. I became part of a tradition that teaches its students not merely how to earn a livelihood, but how to engage thoughtfully with society; not merely how to solve equations, but how to ask meaningful questions; not merely how to build careers, but how to build character. In an age that often measures education by employability alone, Delhi University reminded me that the finest universities perform a quieter task. They do not simply prepare students for the world; rather, they prepare the world for the students they send into it.

And for that lesson, for all its subtlety, its rigour and its humanity, I shall remain indebted to Kirori Mal College, long after the final lecture has ended and the last walk through North Campus has become a memory.





Your Education Digest: Snapshots of events that matter

Are you hosting an event for your institution?
Send us details, and we will be happy to feature relevant events
within this section of UCONNECT

Counsellor's Day Out: Palak Sanghvi, Counsellor for the Orange team, UniversityConnection.in recently shared her reflections on attending the Aberdeen Discovery Day at the University of Aberdeen's Mumbai campus, emphasising that it was a highly valuable visit that provided immense confidence in the institution's offerings. She highlighted the experience as a powerful indicator of programmes that genuinely serve students' best interests, intentionally structured to offer strong academic and cultural alignment for Indian applicants.

A significant portion of her insights focused on the university's distinct academic design, particularly its 4-year undergraduate degrees and 1-year master's programmes tailored specifically with Indian students in mind.

Sanghvi also noted that the admissions process and available scholarship opportunities are remarkably more accessible than one would typically expect from a top - tier UK university. Ultimately, her experience underscored the potential of the Mumbai campus, which is rapidly shaping up to be a truly robust and dynamic learning environment. She concluded by extending her appreciation to the leadership teams from both the UK and India campuses, commending the open, honest conversations that made the visit so impactful.



University Update: Duke is launching a new option for undergrads at Duke-Duke Embark. Students in this program will spend their first semester at the Marine Lab before returning to East Campus in time for basketball season! Students can indicate their interest in this program on the Common App. If they are admitted to Duke, only then can they select to start at Beaufort. Only students off the waitlist might be admitted conditionally on starting at DUML. Students will be able to apply to Duke Embark after they are admitted to Duke, at both Early and Regular Decision, while spaces are available.

Established in 1938 as a summer research and teaching facility, the Duke Marine Lab has evolved into a year-round residential campus dedicated to interdisciplinary education and research in marine science and conservation.

Through Duke Embark, first-year students will explore the theme of environmental change and human well-being in coastal and marine systems. The curriculum includes two core courses (one in the natural sciences and one in the social sciences), along with elective options in chemistry, biology, and marine science and conservation. These courses combine small-classroom learning with hands-on field experiences.



Book Launch: Jobs 2.0: The Ultimate Guide to AI-Proof Your Career by Richa Dwivedi Saklani explores the opportunities emerging for young people in a world shaped by artificial intelligence, synthetic biology, big data, and mixed reality. Rather than viewing AI as a threat, the book examines how technology can augment human potential and create new possibilities across fields such as product development, media, law, public policy, performing arts, psychology, medicine, and more.

Drawing on her experience as a career coach who has worked with over 10,000 individuals, Saklani was inspired to write this book to support students and parents navigating uncertainty and rapid technological change. While acknowledging that no prediction about the future can be certain, the book is grounded in extensive research and presents a compelling vision of a technology-augmented world where adaptability, curiosity, and continuous learning are the keys to success.

For students, parents, and educators seeking to understand the future of work, Jobs 2.0 offers practical insights and an optimistic perspective on thriving in an AI-driven era.

Available on Amazon



UPCOMING EVENTS

Create and Publish an AI Agent
with Futurowise



A Four-Week Research Journey
with the Kruu Scholar Program



IKiGai DATA and Chanakya University Bring Skills
for the Future Academy to Bengaluru





Check your Orange Quotient (OQ)

Welcome to the Bio-Health Escape Room: "Heal the Future"

You're inside the Public Health Command Center, where every medical breakthrough is incredibly powerful, but every societal choice has massive consequences. Your mission is to escape by solving this health science and society challenge.

Ready? Let's cure the future.

Level 1: Find the odd one out: Which one of these is not a career in Health Science & Society?

1. Epidemiologist, Bioethicist, Prompt Engineer
2. Health Policy Analyst, Medical Illustrator, Crypto Day Trader

Level 2: Are you Bio-ethically smart?

3. A new gene-editing tool can eliminate a devastating hereditary disease, but it is currently so expensive that only the ultra-wealthy can access it. What's the ethical move?
 - A. Deploy it immediately for whoever can afford it to advance the science quickly.
 - B. Work on parallel frameworks for equitable global distribution while regulating its rollout.
 - C. Ban the technology entirely so no one can benefit from it until it's free.
4. A predictive AI model flags patient readmission rates flawlessly, but it consistently labels minority neighborhoods as "high risk" due to historical socioeconomic disparities, leading to biased triaging. What's the ethical approach?
 - A. Trust the data completely; numbers don't have biases.
 - B. Shut down the digital health infrastructure and go back to entirely paper records.
 - C. Retrain the model to adjust for systemic inequities and mandate human clinical oversight.
5. A public health crisis hits, and health misinformation is spreading faster on social media than the actual disease. As a health communication official, what do you do?
 - A. Issue rigid, top-down mandates and ignore public skepticism.
 - B. Deliver transparent, empathetic, evidence-based communication while actively addressing community doubts.
 - C. Stop communicating with the public entirely and only publish in academic journals.

Level 3: Are you ready to shape a healthier society?

6. What's the most future-proof mindset for a world driven by advanced medical tech?
 - A. Technology will completely eradicate all human illnesses without us changing our lifestyles.
 - B. Health is entirely an individual responsibility, and societal factors don't matter.
 - C. True health is an intersection of cutting-edge science, human empathy, and equitable social policy.
7. Wearables can track our vitals 24/7, but they cannot fix systemic health disparities. What human skill makes a health system truly resilient?
 - A. Building more expensive medical gadgets.
 - B. Community-driven advocacy, structural problem-solving, and empathetic patient care.
 - C. Memorizing medical textbooks without understanding social determinants of health.

The Orange Meter: Health Quotient (HQ)

Just like the upside-down answer key and the scoring wheel featured at the bottom of, let's see where you land on the meter!

Score 1-3 (Pale Orange): The Lab Isolationist.

You know your technical facts, but you might be forgetting that science doesn't exist in a vacuum! Remember, health requires treating the society, not just the pathogen.

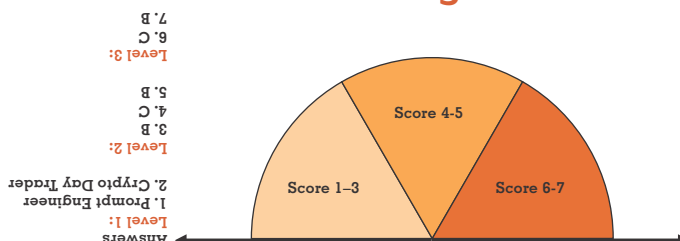
Score 4-5 (Bright Orange): The Balanced Clinician.

You have a solid grasp of how scientific advancements ripple out into communities. You weigh ethics against innovation effectively.

Score 6-7 (Deep Orange): The Global Health Visionary. Excellent!

You understand that true health science requires a perfect cocktail of medical innovation, ethical guardrails, and structural social empathy. You are officially ready to escape the room!

The Orange Meter



Share your story via UCONNECT

We are proud to be connected with a diverse network of individuals and organizations that resonate with our mission of empowering career choices one student at a time. We welcome and value insights from students, parents, partners, and educators on a wide range of topics and issues, and look forward to sharing their perspectives.

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write@uconnectworld.com

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THE ORANGE FORM

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