



جمعية الإمارات للإنترنت الآمن
EMIRATES SAFER INTERNET SOCIETY

newsletter

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February 2022 | Issue 2. Vol. 2



**EXPO 2020 MAJLIS-
SESSIONS ON OUR
DIGITAL FUTURE!**

**METVERSE:
HUMAN BEINGS TO
VIRTUAL BEINGS?**



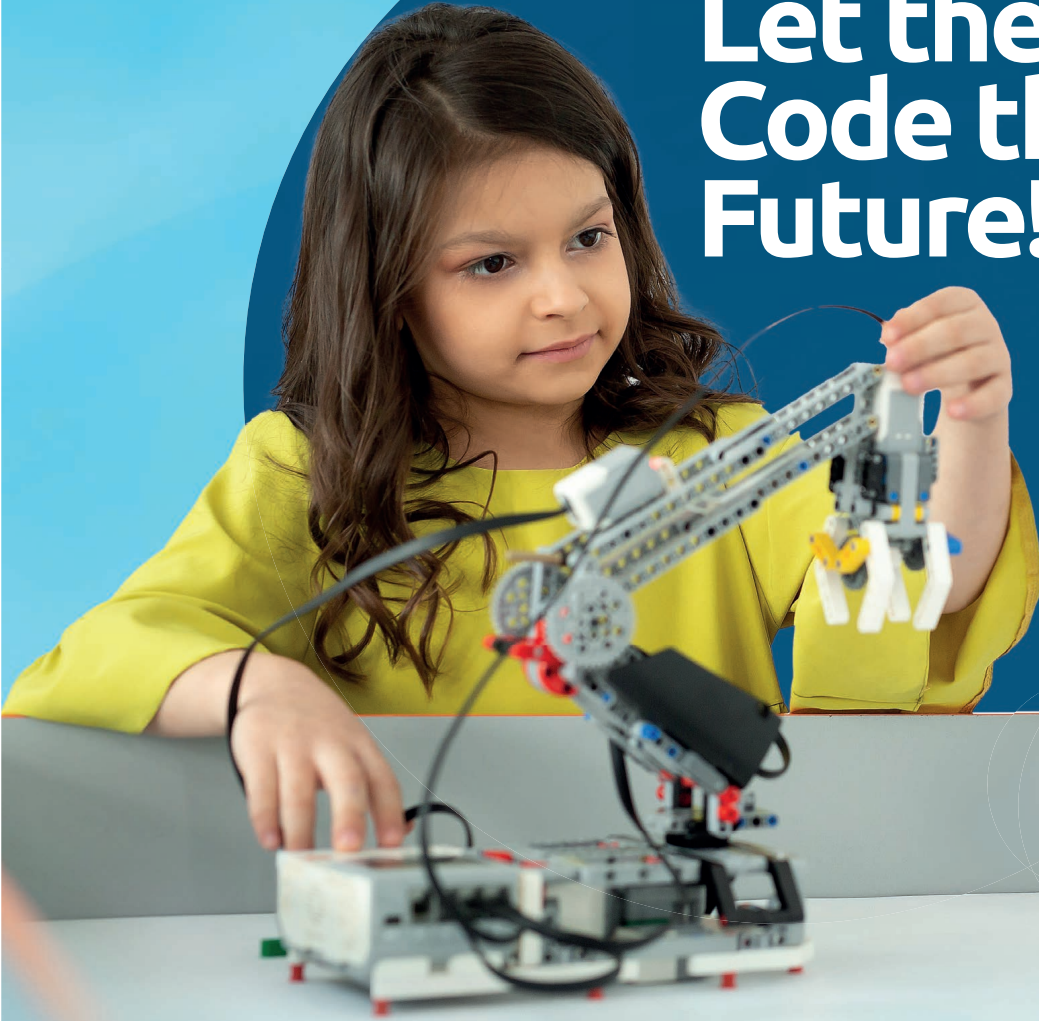
**Safer
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February 8, 2022



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Developing Responsible Digital Citizens



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Future generations will be living in a world that is very different from that to which we are accustomed. It is essential that we prepare ourselves and our children for that new world!

Sheikh Zayed



As you read this editorial in the digital format, the digital world has grown bigger than our real world. The trend in every walk of life indicates that digital life has a predominant place in our life. The pandemic has put the change at a faster pace. We, as a nation, could curb the threats of COVID-19 most effectively. Majority of the population is vaccinated. Economic and social life is getting back to normal. Thanks to the visionary leadership and efficient administration.

EXPO 2020- Dubai had a grand opening in October 2021 and will continue till March 2022. The EXPO, with the theme "Connecting Minds Creating Future" attracts futuristic and enterprising minds from all across the globe. Forest pinball, Play with whales, 4D print of live cells, Expo school programme, Expo University Programme are some of the attractions of Expo 2021 for students and the education community, giving exposure to the wonders of the world that keeps evolving before them.

Digital Majlis, envisioned and created by Abu Dhabi Digital Authority, is bringing bright minds to a platform of discussions and dialogues on addressing human challenges through technology and innovation. Digital Majlis brings out original thoughts and extraordinary solutions. This year, the theme of Digital Majlis is "AI and the future of Government". We are excited to see how these discussions are leading to solutions that transform the future of governance.

It's a matter of great pride that Higher College of technology has the first 120 students trained under the prestigious 'ResilientMe' pilot project of the SESA Ecosystem. ResilientMe focuses on creating a unique digital and localised environment to help its members to create a very specific self awareness and inculcate social emotional competencies. This is the first step towards imparting 21st century skills to our students.

ESAFE has collaborated with Abu Dhabi University and other

premium higher education institutions and universities to create an ecosystem for our children to explore, learn and grow, without compromising the values that keep us thrive.

ESAFE has also joined hands together with Takyon System Solutions Pvt Ltd, pioneers in providing technology solutions and learning experiences to schools and students to reach out to students and education institutions to sensitise them on being responsible while being online.

UAE became the first Arab country and the fifth in the world to reach Mars after launching its "Hope Probe" spacecraft into the orbit of the red planet. Nora AlMatrooshi will be trained by NASA under its 'NASA Astronaut Group 23' programme to be the first Arab lady astronaut from the Emirates. The country also set ambitious targets to land on the moon in 2024 and establish human settlement by 2117.

Such great achievements are strongly backed by the fundamentally strong education system and visionary policies UAE has in place.

Education shapes up us and our future. Education should essentially serve the purpose of shaping us to live the life that the ever changing world demands. Learning has evolved to a great extent that the age-old classroom method is taking a back seat.

Educators find it challenging to bring about the changes that the new normal is demanding. There are technologies and platforms that help them to cope up with the change.

But the questions are,

What is right?

To what extent is it right?

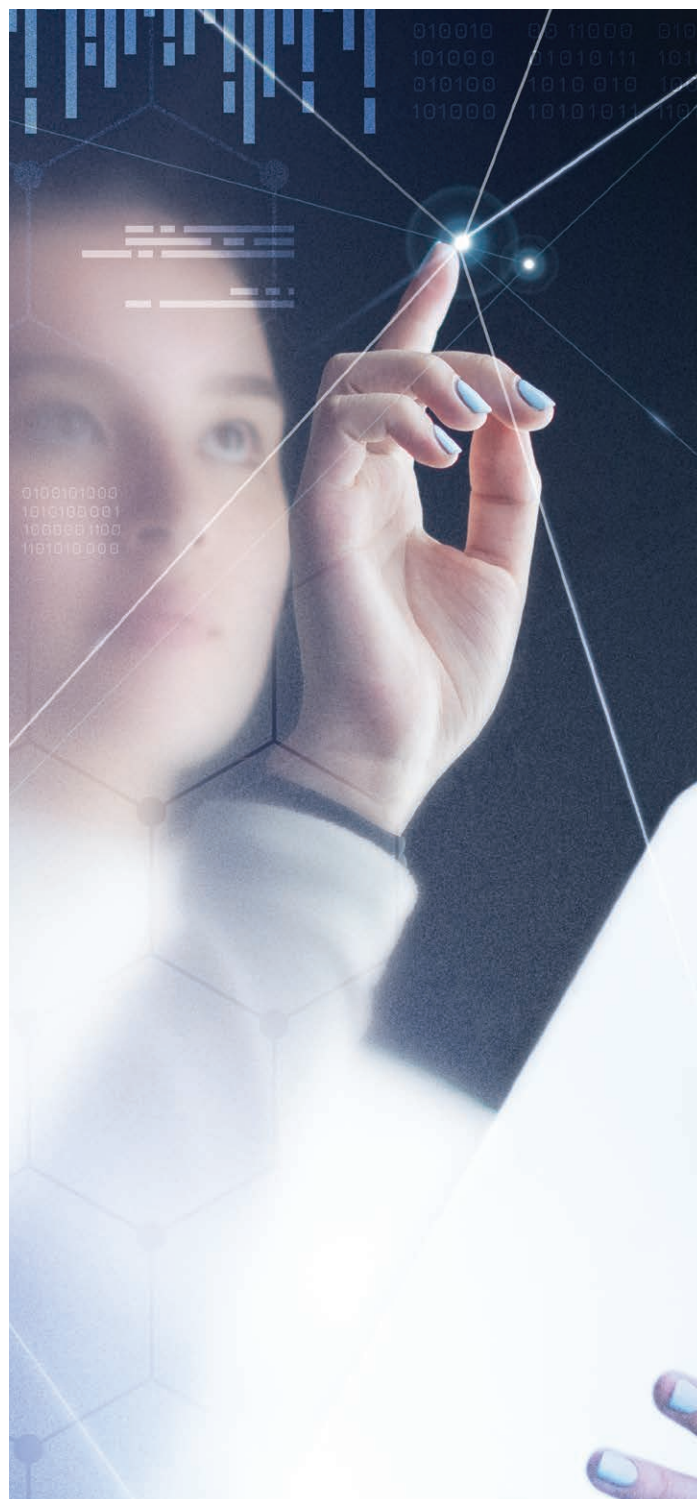
Where to set the boundaries?

To a great extent parenting is protecting. Till children reach an age of maturity, parents keep the protection shields open. Do we ever let our children go out into a busy street till we are sure that they can manage to be safe and find the way back home? Don't we teach our children the manners of behaving in public?

It holds good when our children go online. Digital world opens up great opportunities. As we let our children explore more of the online world, we must realise and let them realise the associated threats. Misbehaviour in the digital world certainly has far reaching consequences. Some of the major threats to be aware and protected from are inappropriate relationships, inappropriate content, inappropriate behavior and misuse of personal data. Doesn't it sound similar to threats of the real world? Well, the nature of threats is the same but the gravity of consequences differ in the online world.

Our children will be spending more of their time online than in the real world. There is no way we can stop this. But we can certainly take measures to help them have a quality online life.

Is there a 'one two three' method to protect our children online? There are some methods and measures advocated. But there are no foolproof methods beyond criticism and short falls. As the digital world keeps evolving, the nature of threats keep changing. To address such concerns, safety measures must also keep evolving. For children, setting up a fair playground with boundaries is a good practise. Children must also be educated that the boundaries and restrictions are on their interest. Children should also be made a part



of the process right from policy making and implementation.

No doubt, children are the future citizens and netizens. We are obliged to give the right values, perspectives and skills to transform them into responsible netizens.

As we bring out this edition of our magazine, we take a step further towards our vision of creating a safe online world for our children while they become responsible digital citizens. Together, let us move ahead and match the pace of the ever changing life. Let our future be brighter with greater achievements in all walks of life.

I hope you will enjoy reading our magazine and I welcome reading your views/comments addressed to:

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Sibi Mathews

Digital workspace: A boon or a bane?

Industrial revolution, product specialisation and the concept of producing for the world has changed the purpose we work for. Our workspace has been evolving right from the day we started working. Every advancement we make in technology has contributed to bettering our work space to ensure increased productivity, profit maximisation and better decision making. Computerisation in the production process has brought about revolutionary changes in the way we work. Some jobs disappeared completely while a lot many were created. Jobs that required a lot of mundane mechanical processes were designed to be carried out by computers or computer controlled machines. This has primarily improved the quality of human life. Every change in our work space was replaced by a new change and it continues forever. As we always say, there is always a scope for improvement even in the most advanced technological advancement we even invented. Often, we as humans undergo changes in the way we think and live, leaving certain technologies obsolete instantaneously.

To put it as a definition, A digital workspace is an integrated technology framework designed to deliver and manage app, data, and desktop delivery. It allows employees to access their apps and data real-time—on any device, from any location, regardless of whether the information is stored through cloud services or in the data center.

Beyond any apprehension, digital workspace is the future of our work life due to its obvious advantages. Lets explore some of them.

- Increased flexibility:- The easiness of working and collaborating from anywhere is so irresistible.
- Reduced operational cost:- Eliminating in person collaboration cuts down a lot of cost including office space, travel, accommodation etc.
- Improved productivity & efficiency :- It has been proved in studies that the adaptation of digital workspace has improved the productivity of the workforce substantially. Tools like google doc helps all team members to collaborate their works smartly and efficiently.
- Increased Revenue:- Once operational cost is reduced and productivity and efficiency are improved that will be reflected in the bottomline for sure.
- Enhanced communication and innovation:- Digital workspace ensures better, easy communication and collaboration.

There are many other advantages other than the ones listed above like improved employee & customer satisfaction. With the announcement of Mark Zukerberg on their plans to work on Metaverse, digital workspace is all set to undergo a paradigm shift. Till now, we had 2D platforms in which we could watch, write and talk to our colleagues. Metaverse will put us all into a 3D VR and AI enabled world facilitating us to have experiences of a workspace collaboration by wearing a set of goggles while sitting at our home in any part of the world. A better and enhanced way of collaboration taking us to a higher realm of efficiency.

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Well, that sounds very nice. Is that full of advantages or should we be cautious about anything? Are we considering every aspect of digital workspace or overlooking something that might cause irreversible changes in our life? As we know every coin has two sides. Let's not fall back to the age old argument that digitalisation has cut down jobs. People have lost their livelihood due to the excess modernisation and computerisation. We already know that some jobs have disappeared as machines and sophisticated algorithms took charge of it. Some jobs have a different nature and characteristics which demand people working on them to unlearn and learn to work adapting to the fresh work environment. In Fact more jobs are created due to modernisation and digitalisation of workspace. The nature of works that need human intervention has been largely being limited to the ones that need creativity, problem solving and critical thinking. No wonder that these skills are the top listed in 21st century skills to lead a fulfilling career and life in the 21st century.

Digital workspace brings the entire workforce collaborating and working together as a single team.

From a bottom-line perspective which includes efficiency and cost of operation, digital workspace is definitely a boon. How about the other aspects of work life? How happy are the people involved, do they miss meeting their colleagues in an office? Do they miss having chit chats and sharing gossip over a cup of coffee? Do they miss the Saturday parties after a week's hard work? Are they striking a work life balance spending most of their time at home yet working? Is the family happy? Studies reveal that adults are spending about 11 hours a day in front of screens either working, playing or socialising. With the introduction of digital work space and the hit of COVID-19 work from home has become the new normal. Under WFH, employees are often asked to spend more time on work than when they used to work from a common office space. The overindulgence in the digital world gradually brings about a change in people to engage in their real world. They tend to be happy in the digital world and do not feel the need to go out and engage in the real world.

All this adds up to the other side of the coin. While we embrace the digital workspace and its obvious advantages, we must also be cautious about this other side. digital workspace, its policies, practices must be designed and implemented with these concerns in mind. Impressive bottomline is a need so is the wellbeing of the people involved.

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Dr. Najla Alnaqbi

Education in the Post COVID era



COVID-19 has made a lot of disruptive changes in our life. It has made its marks in our personal, professional and social life. Some of these changes are permanent, some are temporary. Every walk of our life is affected, so is education.

Education, as the most important business of any society, has continued to serve its purpose only because it could go online. What would have happened to education, if the technology could not come up and offer the solution of taking it online? There would have been a complete stand still. Though we had some shortfalls while moving very quickly to online education by and large it served the purpose. Majority in the education domain was not prepared for such a change. However, the situation made educators, students and parents rise to the occasion. There were concerns of poor IT infrastructure from different parts of the world. A large number of students, especially from the developing nations, could only resort to the lecture classes through television. Some were lucky to have online interactive classes with great online content and trained teachers.

As life goes back from the new normals to the normals we are more used to, it is never 'a going back' to where we come from. Education will be looked at with care and caution. New thoughts and models will certainly emerge out of our experiences during covid 19. This phase gives us the opportunity to consider the purpose and process of education from different perspectives and arrive at models and solutions that will serve the real purpose of education in the long term.

The changes we experienced during the pandemic were short term and situation demanded. The only purpose of such changes was just to keep the ball rolling. Some of these changes are not that great in the long term, some are good to have.

What will be the future of online learning? Will it be fully shelved as schools and colleges open up? Trends reveals that online learning has made its entry in a big way and it is here to stay. But not as it used to be during the pandemic. There will be a blend of classroom learning and online learning. In fact, in the long term online learning can not replace classroom learning. Models will be developed where a blend of both is used efficiently complimenting each other to make teaching and learning effective and impactful.

Can online education be better? If not hit by pandemic, educators would have been embracing online teaching tools at a very slow pace. This would have been primarily because of compliance. On the other hand, how many institutions and educators have considered online learning as a strategic change in the way education happens? How many institutions have invested in digital learning before COVID-19?

The pandemic has brought about a sudden change in this attitude and all the educators now agree that investing on building robust online learning platforms and content is vital for survival in the post COVID era. Improved quality in online learning both in technology and content is expected in recent years.

Should we reconsider the curriculum? This may not be a thought triggered out of pandemic experiences but given the magnitude and momentum of changes we are experiencing, it is clear that lifelong careers and traditional employment pathways will not exist in the way that they had in the past. Jobs and the way we do business are evolving and the evolution is at lightning speed. Thus

there is almost no knowledge or skills that can be guaranteed to meet the needs of the unknown, uncertain, and constantly changing future. For this reason, educational institutions can no longer provide all that is needed for the future before students graduate and enter the world.

The curriculum needs to focus more on developing students' capabilities instead of focusing only on 'template' content and knowledge. It needs to be concerned with students' social and emotional wellbeing as well. Moreover, it needs to make sure that students have an education experience that is globally connected and environmentally connected. As important is the gradual disappearance of school subjects such as history and physics for all students. The content is still important, but it should be incorporated into a competency-based curriculum.

It is important to consider the curriculum as evolving. Although system-level curriculum frameworks have to be developed, they must accommodate changes with time and contexts. Any system-level curriculum should enable the capacity for schools to contextualize and make changes to it as deemed necessary. Such changes must be justifiable of course but a system-level

Online learning has made its entry in a big way and it is here to stay!

curriculum framework should not use national or state level accountability assessments to constrain the changes

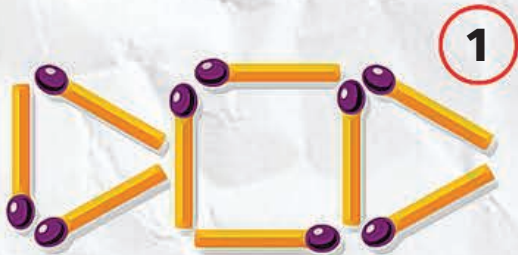
Pedagogy should change as well. Direct instruction should be cast away for its "unproductive successes" or short-term successes but long term damages. In its place should be new models of teaching and learning. The new models can have different formats and names but they should be student-centered, inquiry-based, authentic, and purposeful. New forms of pedagogy should focus on student-initiated explorations of solutions to authentic and significant problems. They should help students develop abilities to handle the unknown and uncertain instead of requiring memorization of known solutions to known problems.

The primary purpose of education is to enlighten the minds and prepare students to lead a quality, fulfilling life. That includes their professional and personal life. In an ever changing world, imparting skills is not so relevant because skills become obsolete quite often. An attitude and mindset of continuous learning, perseverance and ability to adapt quickly to the changing situations make education meaningful and purposeful. Moreover, a shift from teacher or curriculum centric approach to a student centric approach is the need of the hour in education. Visionary educators have set out on this journey. Let's hope that they carve out a way for the generations to excel and illuminate.

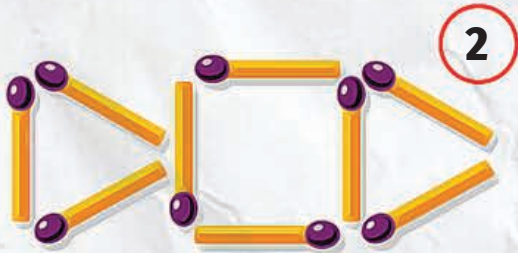
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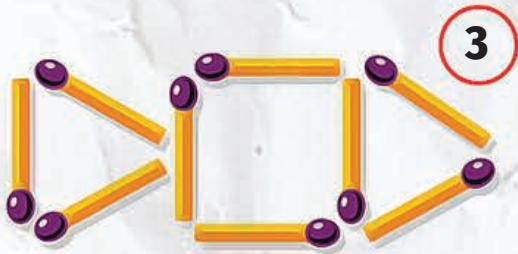
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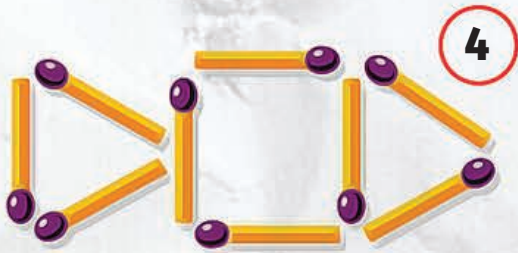
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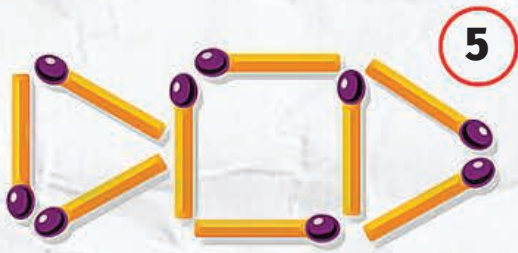
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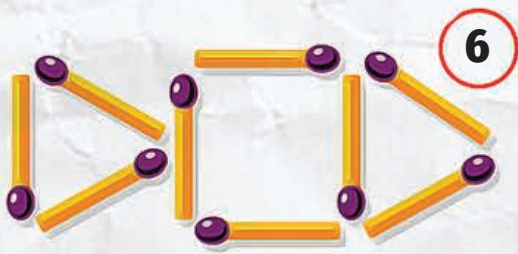
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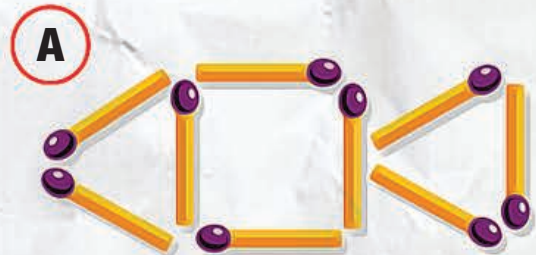
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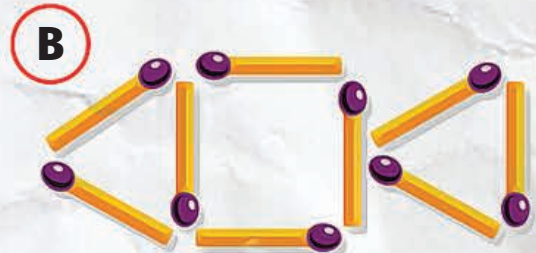
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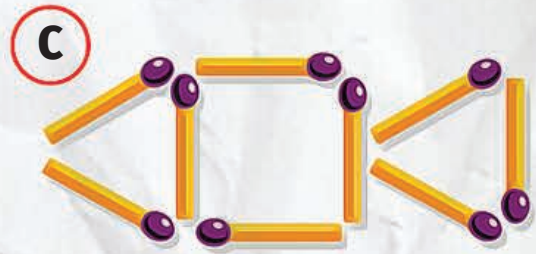
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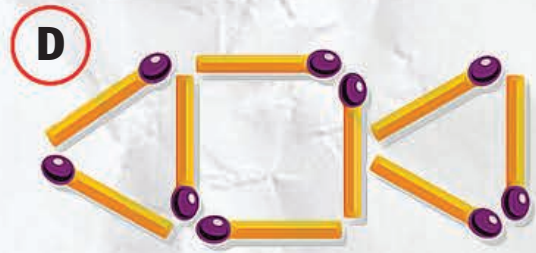
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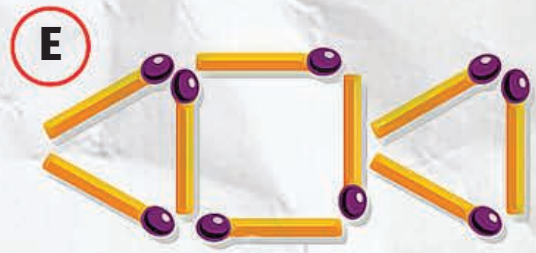
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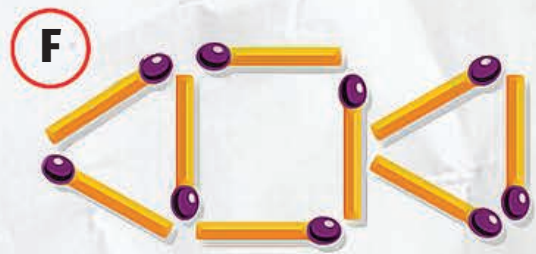
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E



F



Scan the QR code to submit your answers.



Eleven ways to break your children's Digital Addiction

- Pick the right apps
- Teach them balance
- Set limits early on
- Don't use as babysitter
- Hide remote/lock screen
- Govern own screen use
- Link with real world
- Slower pace shows
- No screens in bedroom
- Don't make assumptions
- Get into good habits





Jayesh Sebastian

Metaverse: Are we evolving from human beings to virtual beings?

The word Metaverse was coined in the Sci-fi novel Snow Crash by Neal Stephenson in 1992. The book was about a three dimensional virtual world using our real world as a metaphor, where humans interact with each other as avatars. Back then, it was just a wild imagination of where technology can possibly take us to.

In 2021, when Mark Zuckerberg announced his ambitious plans to invest in Metaverse to build a virtual reality platform that supersedes and replaces the internet, it's no more a wild imagination or a joke. The entire world, especially the technology world, is behind this buzzword. Everyone is curious to see how this evolves. Zukerburg has come up to share his thoughts on this, progress being made, and how technocrats can collaborate together to make this world functional and creative, just like the real world. Primarily, Metaverse offers 3D virtual platforms to work, play and hang out. Metaverse moves the participants into experiencing the interactions between people as if they do in a real world. Creativity has endless opportunities in Metaverse.

All look great and awesome for some. Some are a bit sceptical and concerned. Digitalisation and the obsessive indulgence in the online world has brought about its own concerns. As we proceed further into a three dimensional virtual world from a two dimensional experience, we are bound to experience a lot of difference in the way we carry out our normal day today life. This change is capable of making us less human and more virtual. Is this the evolution of human beings to virtual beings indulging in virtual 3D worlds as 'Avatars' rather than real humans engaging in real conversations and interactions that makes us real humans? No one has an exact answer to this. Sooner or later, the evolution of Metaverse and the related developments will reveal this before our eyes.

Primary concern being raised is about the privacy protection of users. Without government-overseen behavioral standards, Metaverse has all the potential to be an extended yet more dangerous version of user data being used for profit making, without users consent. Regulators and governments will have to consider this with utmost priority. Even if the 2D virtual and online world is around for some time, the regulators are yet to implement policies and mechanisms to ensure complete protection of its users. Metaverse, with its never before options and possibilities will further complicate this concern. Adding to this marketplace competition and misinformation to mislead will take this into a much more complicated realm. Control of data also permits control of markets. After capturing personal information, the digital companies' next step is to build a moat around it to deny access to others.

The Federal Trade Commission's (FTC) antitrust suit against Facebook describes a "buy-or-bury" strategy it alleges to be illegal. By using cash (or stock) generated from the high-margin exploitation of personal data, it is possible to remove a potential competitor via acquisition. If acquiring a competitor doesn't work, then the company can simply crush the competition by denying it the data necessary to compete with a copycat service built on the incumbent's data hoard. The opening advantage in the metaverse will go to those with the data to make the new virtual activities relevant to the user. The result is no different from the present online world in which those with the data hoard it to control the market.

Another area of concern is the behaviour of users. For instance, we see a lot of troll campaigns, hate campaigns, bullying on online platforms. The negative messages are being given as a video, audio or a written content. When it comes to a 3D virtual world like Metaverse, people would take avatars yelling at people or things that they do not like. The damage this causes would be much more intense.

Kris Kolo, executive director of the VR/AR association points out that, "Just like with any technology, I think it's a balance. Technology is here to bring us together, to connect us in different ways and the metaverse is just a new way of immersive online experience.". While we thrive hard to ensure freedom of speech and expression to all, regulators must create a level playing field for all considering the safety, security of personal data. The creators of the 3D worlds should also not be allowed to have complete access to the personal data of the users. They should also not use it for their profit maximisation without any thought on the privacy to be honoured.

Metaverse moves the participants into experiencing the interactions between people as if they do in a real world.

What will happen to human relationships? The metaverse is an augmented reality and virtual reality world that would allow a person to live out anything inside it, replicating several aspects in real life and mixing it with fiction or fantasy. This will pose serious social, psychological and behavioral concerns. Wearing a set of glasses leads us to a world that we like and prefer saving us from the realities. In the metaverse, people can have power and do whatever they want without the bounds of money, boundaries, restrictions, and more. It would indeed have rules and regulations, but a person's imagination is endless, and there are not as many boundaries in exploring the metaverse once it arrives.

It is a relief that the creator of Metaverse, Facebook has also taken these concerns seriously and participated in discussions and dialogues to effectively address these concerns. Let's hope that as Metaverse opens up its doors for us, we will be entering a new phase of our life without losing the basic characteristics that make us human.

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Dr. Abdulla Mohamed Al Mehyas



Expo 2020 Majlis: Sessions on our digital future

The secret behind the advancement of humankind is the ability to think and comprehend matters beyond food and survival. We imagine, explore, interpret, believe, reason out and share ideas and concepts either to solve problems or to make our life easier and better. Our life would have been a lot different if communities and societies of deferred ethical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds shut doors of sharing ideas and concerns. Open communication opens up fresh perspectives and thoughts. Something which bothers us today may be a 'puzzle solved long back' for some others. Certain concerns can only be addressed if the entire human race collaborates and acts. Collaboration brings in the magical power of synergy. All this starts with a very simple yet powerful tool, Communication.

International Expos have always been a great platform for mutual dialogues of people from all across the globe belonging to different walks of life. Experts from different parts of the world come together on a single platform, share their ideas, concerns, thoughts and experiences helping people all over the world to make their lives easier, better and sophisticated. Expo 2020 Dubai has produdly been continuing this practice by merging it with the long established Emrati and Arab tradition of the majlis. World majlis is sparking global dialogue and inspiring new perspectives

and conversations to find answers for the challenges of the 21st century.

Concerns of the 21st century can not be discussed without the progress we experience in the digitalisation of our life. Our real life has been undergoing changes to the extent that it is becoming hard to distinguish between reality and virtual reality. History teaches us that every progress that we make, every change we bring into our life to make it better comes with its own flip side. It's up to us to make judicious decisions while adapting to the change. Hence, as an idea to discuss at World majlis 2020, the progress in digitalisation of different aspects of our life takes the front seat. Organisers of World majlis 2020 have realised this need and have organised an excellent platform for experts in different walks of life concerned with the massive digitalisation drive to share ideas, thoughts, visions, threats and concerns. All together these discussions reveal various aspects of our future before us, vividly.

World majlis 2020 has comprehensively covered the topics to be discussed in a brilliant manner. Some of the discussions that brought out ideas and thoughts about our digital future are briefly discussed as follows:



1. Eyes up! - Navigating our new hyperconnected reality

Coinciding with UAE Innovation Month, Expo 2020 Dubai gathered students from schools across the UAE to discuss how we can be more responsible consumers of technology in our new hyperconnected reality and ways to ensure our relationship with technology benefits ourselves, our communities and society.



2. Shu El Akhbaar?

Public space reflects the society that creates it. In today's world – dominated by the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and an ever-changing technology that transforms the way we interact socially – what is the future of public space? Especially when 3D virtual worlds like Metaverse are transforming the way we interact.

Will public space still play a central role in the identity of cities and communities and their interactions? How is public space evolving to reflect how we learn, work, eat and shop? How can we find places where people can reconnect meaningfully outside of the digital realm? What new artistic, economic, or recreational needs can be met by innovative public space? In our digital future, how can public space evolve to keep us connected? This discussion was held on 14th October 2021 and was great food for thought for the participants and the entire world concerned.



3. Beyond Reality: Welcoming new worlds

This World majlis brought together senior thought leaders in the fields of technology, innovation and art to discuss augmented reality, mirror worlds and their impact on the future of humanity. The key questions raised were, how will these changes transform our lives and shape our interactions? What opportunities do these developments represent for collaboration, storytelling and understanding? What type of responsibility and ethical considerations will this entail? Ideas and thoughts raised reflected the common concern shared by communities all across the globe.



4. Technology with heart and mind

The thought driving this discussion was, 'How can technology serve humanity to promote tolerance, happiness and wellbeing?' At Expo 2020 Dubai's second Next Gen World Majlis, school students from across the UAE were asked to consider whether humanity is at risk of becoming overly dependent on technology, and how we can embrace the benefits of innovation without compromising on our personal creativity or intelligence.



5. Aligning clock speed

Transformation in technology, society and government. The pendulums of technology, government and society swing at different speeds. Technology innovation is faster than that of society and, in turn, changes within society are often ahead of government. Technologies with systemic impacts on people and communities also advance more rapidly than our ability to truly grasp their implications and to weigh short-term benefits against long-term concerns (or vice-versa).

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Social Media & Mental Health

Man is a social creature. We need to be connected with others for our very existence. The quality of our social connections have a direct impact on our mental health and happiness. Having a healthy social life can ease stress, anxiety, and depression, boost self-worth, provide comfort and joy, prevent loneliness, and even add years to our life. On the flip side, lacking strong social connections can pose a serious risk to our mental and emotional health.

As social media has become a part and parcel of our life, most of us rely on different social media platforms for socializing and to stay connected. Each platform is designed to address some specific needs and fulfillments. All of them are good and effective on their own terms. However, we must remember that social media interactions can never replace the real socialization that we need in our life. In order to get the benefits and to feel the positivity of socializing we need to have real face to face interactions. That would only release the hormones required to fight stress and loneliness. On the other hand, studies reveal that excessive online indulgence, especially on the online social

media platforms causes increased levels of stress, depression, anxiety, sadness and frustration.

Psychiatric studies on the effect of online social media on the mental health of the users reveals that social media has positive and negative impact on the mental health of the users. Most of these studies are not conclusive but indicative. Lot of subjectivity elements are to be considered while we look at the findings of these studies. However, multiple studies point at the same type of effects of social media on mental health.

Let's consider the positive and negative impacts of social media on mental health in a little detail.

On the positive side, online social media platforms help us stay connected. It helps to be in touch with friends and families from any part of the world. Finding new friends and being part of groups of shared common interests is easier on social media. Social media serves as an outlet for our emotions and self expressions. On social media, people express their thoughts and emotions on different topics without hesitation. Basically, social media platforms serve the purpose, it is made for.

On the other hand, social media certainly has some negative impact on mental health. Multiple studies have found a strong link between heavy social media and an increased risk for depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts. Let's discuss some of them.

The feeling of 'not enough'- Online social media is full of 'the best of one's life'. The photos, videos, text and any form of content one shares are always the good things in their life, that too in a much polished and made good manner. However it is a known fact for anyone viewing this content, that creates a 'my life is not so happening feel' in others. This envy and dissatisfaction causes mental agony.

FOMO (Fear of missing out)- Contents on the happening life of others creates a fear of missing out in others primarily triggered with a thought that I could not achieve or live a life others are living. This affects self esteem very badly, triggering anxiety, and fueling even greater social media use. FOMO can compel you to pick up your phone every few minutes to check for updates, or compulsively respond to each and every alert-even if that means taking risks of using your phone while you're driving, missing out on sleep at night, or prioritizing social media interaction over real world relationships.

Ideally, social media usage must reduce loneliness. Contrary to that, studies reveal that excessive usage of social media increases loneliness and isolation. Reducing social media usage will help improve your overall wellbeing.

Studies show that about at least 10% of the teenagers in the social media platforms are victims of cyberbullying and offensive comments. Needless to mention that such aggressive attacks will leave lasting effects on mental health.

People find themselves self absorbed into social media. Posting endless selfies creates an unhealthy self centeredness and moves them further away from the fun and pain of the real world.

Most of us use social media through our smartphones. Its easy and very convenient. That a world waiting at the end of two to three touches. This easiness of hyperconnectivity triggers impulsive behaviour. Over and above this, our phones are constantly alerting us on every activity that is in our social media accounts. Inviting us to spend the entire day and night with the blue light of the screen lighting up our face. This is how these companies engage us more and more in their world. But like in alcohol or gambling addiction, social media usage creates psychological craving to get more and spend more on it, over and over again. For many of us, social media is a bunker to hide our head whenever we feel anxious, awkward, or lonely. Never do we realise that such escapes deprive ourselves of the real social interactions that would have happened

If you spend more time on social media than spending with your friends and family,

if you are comparing yourself with others in social media,

if you are experiencing cyberbullying or feel that you have no control over what others write about you, if you are distracted at school or work and have a pressure to post something or oth all that time, if you find yourself too busy on phone and do not do

any sort of self reflection on what you are, how you have been doing,

if you have sleep problems and checking social media is that last thing you do before falling into sleep and the first thing as you wake up in the morning

That indicates that social media has affected your mental health in a very bad way.

Is there a solution? If yes, what is that? The only solution is to be cautious about our social media life and make changes to improve our behaviour. Lets mind the following to have a healthy social media experience

1. Steps to reduce use

Reduce time online. Studies reveal that even a reduction of 30 minutes in the time spent online has surprising results on mental health.

Track the time spent on social media. There are many apps for this purpose. As you start measuring the time spent. we will start reducing the time spent.

Turn the phone off when you are with friends or family, turn the social media notifications off. Don't bring your phone to the bedroom.

Reduce social media checks. If you have the habit of checking your phone every few minutes, extend that to 15 minutes or 30 minutes.

Remove social media apps from your phone. Use it only on your tab or computer. This is a drastic but effective step to control social media use.

2. Have a purpose

Many of us log in to our social media account without any purpose and end up hanging out here and there spending hours together. At the end we realise that we have not done anything worthwhile. Let's have a purpose when we visit our social media world. Make sure that you get out of that one the purpose is met. Be an active social media user. Use it with a motive not to just be there, wandering around and wasting our precious time.

3. Spend more time in the real world

Fill your life with more and more real social interactions of family and friends. play some real games together, not online games. Join a club or an organisation with any sort of social or cultural vision, engage yourself in activities that fulfil your ideas of giving back to the society. Lets have more and more face to face interactions. Social awkwardness is just a starting problem. The more you push yourself against the sense of feeling odd, you will feel it is easier, better and rewarding.

In addition to all these, make sure that you take time to reflect, invest time in health and wellbeing. Social media is good when we use it. When it starts using us, it will ruin us like a slow poison.

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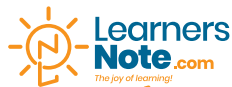
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