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EdelGive Foundation celebrates 2020's Heroes of Hope in Education

December 11, 2020

Editorial Team



Empty blackboards, silent playgrounds and unread books – the lockdown posed a severe threat to the state of education. With the hope to spark the right conversations and find some answers, EdelGive Foundation conducted its annual programme EDGE 2020, last evening. EDGE is a collaborative platform initiated by the Foundation with the aim to connect exceptional non-profit organisations with the funding fraternity, in-turn facilitating conversations on collective impact.

Here are some key highlights from Day 2:

Two bright Class X students opened the evening by speaking about the learning challenges they faced due to the pandemic. **Aksha Ali** and **Shahzadi Gulafsha** from **Samaritan Mission (High) School**, along with their **Principal, Vinod Ram**, were in conversation with **Atul Gandhi, Head, Investments, EdelGive Foundation**. The key findings that emerged from this discussion was a stark reminder that internet connectivity was not a luxury for all. The financial pressure to gain access to a smartphone or internet is a big concern which leaves out many students from the right to education under such circumstances.

"It is extremely important for us to remember that our work is for these children and millions of their kind. Their aspirations, fears and voices need to be heard and accounted for, while we build amplified solutions or technological innovations."

Naghma Mulla, President & COO, EdelGive Foundation.

Nikita Ketkar, COO, Masoom and **Aditya Natraj, Founder & Director, Kaivalya Education Foundation (KEF)** were in conversation with **Vivek Kumar, Co-Founder & CEO, Kshamtalaya Foundation**, to explore the complexities of running education programmes amid the crisis at different scales and locations. All agreed that there was an opportunity and a shift in practices. EdTech had taken over some areas of learning seamlessly and was accepted widely, even though it had its limitations. Moving to an online system for education has worked beautifully, with institutional budgets coming down drastically.

In the next segment, **Osama Manzar, Founder and Director, Digital Empowerment Foundation** was in conversation with **Naghma Mulla, President & COO, EdelGive Foundation** to look at the role of technology and how the digital-learning divide could be overcome. He firmly believes that there is a need to train teachers with digital skills. There is also a need for meaningful connectivity – 2G will not solve problems in remote areas. The plan now must go micro and at an individual level, not in classrooms alone, but into 280 million homes.

Two leading foundations that operate in education in India discussed the kinds of solutions they used to reach out to students during the lockdown. **Geeta Goel, Country Director, Michael and Susan Dell Foundation India** and **Anurag Behar, CEO, Azim Premji Foundation** were in conversation with **Gayatri Nair Lobo, COO, A.T.E Chandra Foundation**. The organisations have managed to work closely with state Government programmes, especially on offline neighbourhood classes. Education had to become a hybrid version, where online and offline practices had to blend.

"We need to consider the nature of education to reach curricular goals – the nature requires intimate interaction between a student and a teacher, holding the child's attention, taking it step by step. This doesn't happen online. Online education is therefore ineffective for kids."

– Anurag Behar – CEO, Azim Premji Foundation (<https://azimpremjifoundation.org/>).

The final discussion for the evening was between **Ashish Dhawan, Founder-Chairman, Central Square Foundation** and **Vidya Shah, Chairperson and CEO, EdelGive Foundation**. Ashish shared his journey from Indian private equity investor to a philanthropist, along with some insights on how non-profit organisations could structure and function to deliver outstanding results. He believed that taking the time to think differently, looking at global strategies, seeking collaborations and finally investing in the right team was vital.

"Maharashtra with over 600,000 teachers alone employs more people than at TCS, one of India's largest companies. But without the same organisation systems backbone that an equivalent private sector organisation has – in terms of people, processes, infrastructure, budgets. So, the scale of the issue is large."

– Vidya Shah, Chairperson and CEO, EdelGive Foundation

The final evening of EDGE 2020 concludes on Dec 17th, 6 pm on the www.edelgiveedge2020.com (<http://www.edelgiveedge2020.com>). The discussion focuses on challenges that women have been facing during the pandemic and the role organisations at the grassroots, philanthropic partners and the administration can play to support them.

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