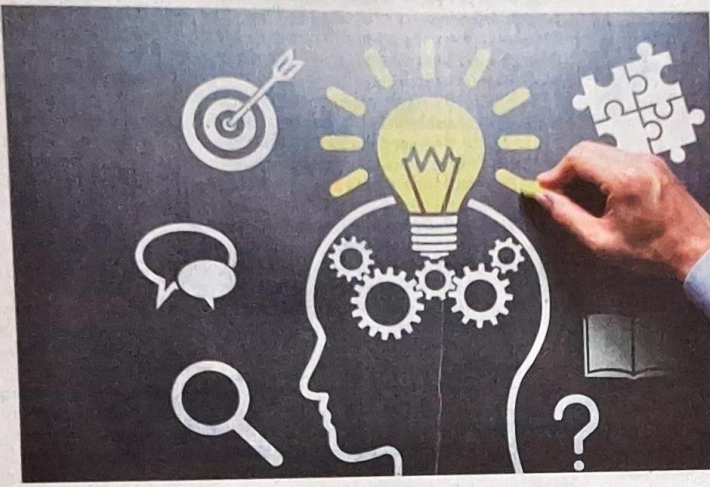


# EDUCATION PLUS

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Salil Sahadevan

Ask any accomplished artist, industrialist or anyone who made a mark in their craft whether all phases of learning were fun. If you believe learning should be fun, think about what happens when the fun stops. When you learn graphic design, jumping into an app is fun; undoubtedly a good start. But, graphic design as a domain is broader than any specific technology or software. So, if you fail to advance from the app, you are stuck with the wrong reference point. After all, education is not an app. Sadly, if you anticipate lot of fun, you are less likely to be an expert in any area soon.



GETTY IMAGES/STOCKPHOTO

## Is fun overrated in learning?

### The pressure to make learning fun in the name of engagement undermines learning

dualistic cultures, which are currently under question. If we want independent, self-sufficient children and youth, we must give them the tools and knowledge. That requires challenge, direction and an understanding that learning will not always be fun, says Michael F. Mascolo, a professor of psychology. The truly independent and self-reliant child knows that learning can be challenging and even painful. But learning does not have to be boring. Contagious laughter and humour come naturally in any high-energy learning situation. Fun is not a problem; the student, research suggests, is more motivated to learn about 12-15 months to

chology. The truly independent and self-reliant child knows that learning can be challenging and even painful. But learning does not have to be boring. Contagious laughter and humour come naturally in any high-energy learning situation. Fun is not a problem; the student, research suggests, is more motivated to learn about 12-15 months to

search for fun almost as a necessity in education is the problem.

### Playful pedagogies

Fun is different from play, enjoyment, and meaning. Play is one of the most brain-friendly methods of learning. Play entails taking chances, trying new things, and pushing the boundaries of our ability. Playful pedagogies open doors to creating knowledge.

On the contrary, what you get from an amusement park is fun. What you feel after a personal discovery is enjoyment. What you get from a well-lived life is meaning. It is the joy of mastery, the pleasure of competence, that gives enjoyment and meaning. Preparing a student to anticipate fun in learning is inviting them to be naïve.

Game-based learning environments and gamification

tion are different approaches to learning and their efficiency depends on their design. Irrespective of the pedagogy, fun should not be the focus. It is no more than clickbait to introduce a topic. The pressure to make learning fun in the name of engagement undermines learning.

Learning may be difficult because you may not understand many exciting things until you first grasp certain boring things. Fun is a poor substitute to measure any educational process. At best, fun appears as a by-product. The real challenge is rediscovering the love for learning.

Let us spend more time exposing students to the excitement and beauty of learning rather than making extra efforts to make things fun. Meaning-making and value-finding can guide other class components such as games, movements, hands-on projects, collaboration, real-world cases, reflective activities and virtual spaces. The effort can be supported by feedback, alternative methods to assess student engagement and the use of thinking tools. Finally, the entire process can be augmented with technology.

The idea is to paint a realistic picture of the complexity of the modern world and to equip the student to find his/her way. That is where educational energy gets a better return on investment for an uncertain future. So let fun take a back seat.

### Views expressed are personal

The writer is Deputy Secretary, University Grants Commission, Analyst, a Brookfield

## Identify your strengths

### Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help



OFF THE EDGE Nandini Raman

I recently passed Class 12 (Science stream with Biology). I am interested in law and food production. Which one has more scope? Sneha

Dear Sneha,

Both choices are far apart, unless you want to be a lawyer in the food processing industry. Identify what you love and enjoy. I would recommend that you get an in-depth career profile done to understand your personality, aptitude and core interests before you choose your course.

I completed Class 12 (PCM) with 95% but am confused about what to do next. I am not interested in JEE, but my parents want me to opt for it. What do I do? Dinesh

Dear Dinesh,

Unfortunately, this continues to be a challenge. Have you considered Bachelor of Architecture (B. Arch), Ethical Hacking courses or a B.Sc. across Physics,

Chemistry, Agriculture, Maths, Statistics, Aviation, Geology, Product Design, Forensic Sciences, Computer Science, Defence Studies, Animation and Multimedia, Physical Sciences?

You can also try the National Defence Academy exams to join the Indian Army, Indian Air Force or Indian Navy.

Business Administration and Management Studies is another huge cluster, Humanities and Commerce subjects also offer some great career choices.

I completed my B.A. (hons) in Sociology Major and Psychology Minor and am currently pursuing MSW. In the second year, we have to choose a specialisation (options are Community Development, HRM, and Medical and Psychiatric Social Work). I am also a Civil Services aspirant and am confused about which one to choose. Which of these will help my UPSC exam preparations? Saloni

Dear Saloni,

All three choices are interesting. You must shortlist one in terms of what you inherently enjoy and will love to study, both at the course level and for the UPSC exam. Make a list of the pros and cons of

each once you know the semester portions (with specific topics) for this year and make an informed choice.

I am a Political Science graduate. I want to travel and earn. The Indian Foreign Service excites me, but the syllabus includes Maths, which is my weakest point. I am stressed and demotivated. Is there any travelling-related career that I can pursue? Mahek

Dear Mahek,

Besides Maths being a weak link, the UPSC exam is also one of India's most difficult competitive exams. A single attempt can take a few years of preparation, from the prelims to the interview.

Jobs that allow you to travel are that of a flight attendant, a cruise ship worker, an international aid worker, a foreign service worker, or a tour guide.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to [eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com](mailto:eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com) with the subject line 'Off the edge'.

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