

## Deschooling: A Movement Towards Educational Transformation

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### Abstract

*Children learn the most important lessons of their lives from their homes and community. Schooling provides literacy and knowledge beyond the society that the child may be present in; however, a lot may be imbibed from parents and elders who may never have had schooling, yet have learnt from the school of experience. Deschooling as a concept is new and is emerging for people that can be better utilised to impart formal education to children. This form of education was majorly about building a skill set rather than following a routine existence from the bookish curriculum. This paper is an attempt towards discussing how deschooling if practised properly can prove to be a transformative way of learning.*

### INTRODUCTION

In the era of the 50s, 60s and 70s when Ivan Illich was talking about the deschooling society, the world joined the celebration of awareness. In India, Sri Aurobindo was discussing the nature and power of the human mind in training mental faculties and also

about successive teaching within the country. As John Dewey stated that “School is the miniature of the society” and it is a common thought/belief that students can learn only through proper schooling. Although children spend their most precious time at home and in the community and they learn most of their life lessons from

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home and community, but yet in our society schools have good weightage over those. When Ivan Illich wrote his book *Deschooling Society* (1971), it evolved as a big pedagogical shift and established a milestone in the area of the teaching-learning process as it has been transformed into a movement and for educational betterment, various stakeholders started to discuss the alternative of schooling.

### **SCHOOLING Vs DESCHOOLING**

*“My grandmother wanted me to have an education so she kept me out of school”*

– Margaret Mead

Margaret Mead was a renowned American academic anthropologist and this quote by her states explicitly the title of this research paper which deals with an analysis of the concept of deschooling as a movement towards educational transformation.

Illich’s idea of deschooling may be understood better in his own words, “We can depend on self-motivated learning instead of employing teachers to bribe or compel the student to find the time and the will to learn....we can provide the learner with new links to the world instead of continuing to funnel all educational programs through the teacher.” He further wrote, “Mainly students, especially those who are poor, intuitively know what the schools do for them. They school them to confuse process and substance. Once these become blurred, a new logic is assumed that

the more treatment there is the better the results or escalation leads to success. The pupil is thereby schooled to confuse teaching while learning grade advancement with education, a diploma with the ability to say something new. This imagination is schooled to accept service in place of value. Medical treatment is mistaken for health care, social work for the improvement of community life, police protection for safety, military poise for national security, and the rat race for productive work. Health, learning, dignity, independence and creative endeavour are defined as little more than the performance of the institutions which claim to serve those ends and their improvements are made to depend on allocating more resources to the management of hospitals, schools and other agencies in question” (Deschooling Society, 1971).

Various other elements of the latest civilisation such as aid to third world nations, compulsory schooling, consumerism and others reflect a little on the basic quality of human life. As analysed by Ivan Illich, the various norms of schooling harm the society particularly the poor class of society and by denying them joy and human dignity. These norms include the process and need for certification, class and distinction. Illich talked about all the awkwardness of society and the education system entitled ‘why we must disestablish school’, ‘phenomenology of school’,

'ritualisation of progress' and others in his book, *Deschooling Society* which directed pedagogical shift and contributed to the form of critical pedagogy. This initiative by Illich took shape of a movement.

At present by education, we mean to prepare the child so that they can earn sufficiently to run their family and their future. Everyone (especially those who relate education to prestige and standards) wants to make their child a doctor, an engineer, a civil servant or any other professional who has the scope for prosperity and prestige. Though this process is happening with a particular class of society and another particular class of society remains deprived of their right to be educated. Such things and thoughts create inequality and increase the gaps among various classes of society. We can see these inequalities in various reports (E.g., World Inequality Report 2018, *www.wid.world/team*).

The goal of education is to create equality and to bridge the gap among the various classes of society, not to create inequality and increase the gaps. This scenario forces us to rethink and analyse our current education system despite taking various valuable and necessary measures by the governments and other stakeholders as to why we are not able to build an educated society along with a sense of humanism? This is the main reason behind the evolution of the term, deschooling. Here, a quote from the book *Deschooling Society*

by Illich explains, "School is not by means the only modern institution which has as its primary purpose the shaping of man's visions of reality but the schools enslave more profoundly and more systematically. Since only schools are credited with the principal function of forming clinical judgments and paradoxically try to do so by making learning about oneself, about others and nature depend on a pre-packaged process." The process of schooling is defined by him as "An institution which is age-specific, teacher-related, requires complete and compulsory attendance and has a fixed curriculum." In the sense of Illich, deschooling is a secularisation of teaching and learning by encouraging creative and exploratory learning. A convivial environment is provided to the child which would lead to his/her personal growth.

After the birth of the term deschooling by Illich, the education sector felt a revolution and there were discussions on the pedagogy of teaching and learning in a new way. So many people came for and against this concept, they analysed as well as criticized Illich's view regarding education and schooling. Henting, Everitt Reimer, John Holt, Paulo Freire and Howard S. Becker came up with some modifications to the concept of deschooling and suggested some other alternatives. Nowadays, the fastest growing and popular concept is homeschooling across the globe as an alternative to schooling. *Honey Comb* is a book written by

Ayan Gogoi, he is just a five-year-old and never went to school making him the youngest writer in India. There is another example of the chess player Anuradha Beniwal, an author of the best-seller *Azadi Mera Brand*; she took her education till senior secondary from home. There are so many examples like Ayan Gogoi and Anuradha Beniwal across the globe and the concept of deschooling paved the way for the emergence of homeschooling undoubtedly.

## CONCLUSION

However, homeschooling has its route in the ancient and medieval Indian education system. It became extinct in the modern Indian education system after the acceptance of Macaulay Minutes in 1835 and followed the colonial education system blindly. Well, the deschooling movement forced the world to think towards a pedagogical shift that is from teacher and curriculum-centred to a child-centred education system. Hence, up to some extent, various responsible bodies are shaping and making plans to keep children in the centre of need (NCF 2005 and NCFTE 2009, Learning: The treasure within). According to the study conducted by the University of North Carolina, Birmingham University and the University of California (2018), the parental environment is more important than the schooling of children. The students who have a better bonding with their parents perform better in life skills. In the age of technological revolution when

students can access all information with a single click, why should one follow the rigid and uninteresting framework of formal education just for the sake of getting certification. It must be a place where students can feel free and be able to understand the art of living to learn how to live together (Four Pillars of Education, Delores Report, 1997).

According to Von Henting (pioneer of the term, deschooling the schools), the following should be the characteristics of a deschooled school:

- It shall help in bringing back the importance of genuine experience in the process of learning. It means knowledge will be gained as far as possible through real-life situations, experience and experiments, otherwise, all will be present with a single click, i.e., Google, and schools will become only the medium to be certified.
- Schools would be open to changes, give more opportunities for experiments and exchange of experiences and ideas. Teachers & taught should concur to bloom the school and resolve its aims and strategies.
- A teacher's duty would not be confined to teaching, instructing children to perform a task but the teacher would also counsel, guide, research, report political incidents, etc., and will be as human as the pupil, having family and friends and living in the same society as the pupils. This paves

the way to inspire their students to work similarly. Children will learn in a deschooled school through engagement in different tasks in and outside of school either with the help of their teachers, peer group or on their own.

- Children would also be encouraged to explore, analyse, experiment, make use of their imagination, creativity and emotions in conceptualising a variety of social, economic, cultural and political processes going on around them and become self-sufficient and also be aware of what's happening in their surroundings. This would help in bridging the gap between society and its individuals.
- Other key role actors in the deschooled school format are parents; they play a very important component in their learning process of the children. Parents on their part will also be actively involved in their children's education. Parents could provide their assistance and guidance out of their occurrence. This would let the children learn about different things outside the school. It would also encourage parents to some of their time and energy with their children's extracurricular activities,

for example in the kitchen, garden, garage, etc. Thus, the deschooled school would restore the dialectical connection between knowledge and experience.

- Adults should not solve the problem or suggest ways to find a solution, but the children should be encouraged to work on their own. This increases their faith in themselves as well as brings a sense of responsibility.

Such kind of learning in a social network is possible when the student's figure is limited, namely in small-scale schools, in a small community, where interaction and integration are easier and students also learn in the environment in which they live. There is no division based on their caste, creed, ambitions or talents and potential or their professional aspirations. To enable learning in such small-scale deschooled schools, more teachers are needed. Parents will be also playing the role of teachers at home and complement the teacher's tasks as discussed earlier. It is obligatory to make schools a place where learning happens with pleasure and spontaneously, meaning that situations are neither created artificially nor are they fictitious.

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