

Schools take to e-governance in bid to improve performance

Schools credit adoption of technology, analytics for better educational outcomes and higher productivity

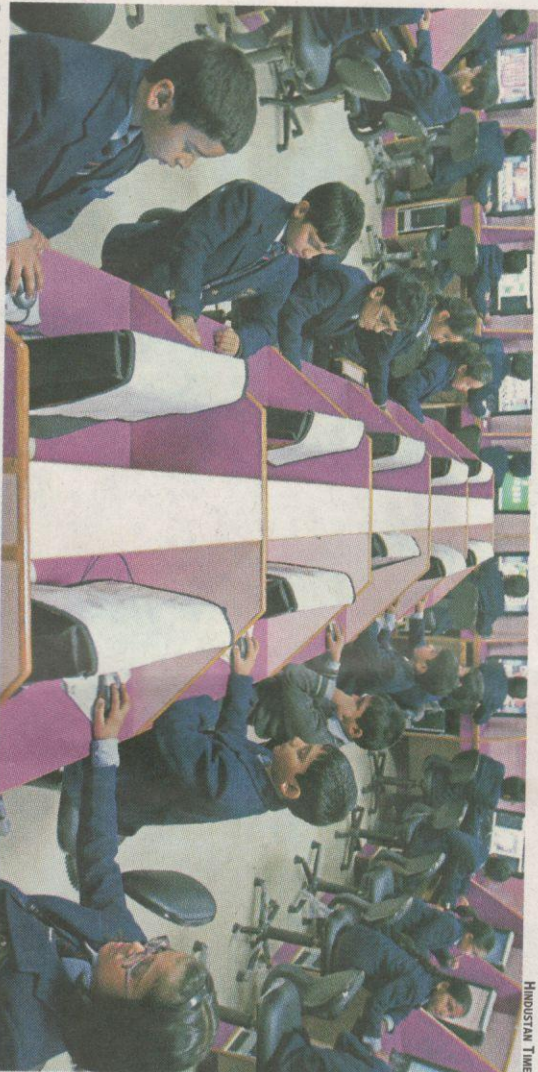
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From his modest office, Suresh Singh logs into his computer and checks on his colleagues' attendance. He then proceeds to look up the progress made by his students with coursework. All in a matter of minutes.

Singh moves away from his computer to admit sheepishly that he was late on two occasions last month—"Five minutes each, but yes, I was late."

The past few months have seen a sea change for Singh, two years away from retirement. But it's change for the better. "Now I am more of a teacher," he says about a job he loves, and "less of an administrator." Of late, he claims to be taking more classes and doing less file work.

As principal of a Kendriya Vidyalaya in south Delhi, Singh credits the adoption of technology under the e-governance programme with helping his school, one of nearly 1,200 central schools, improve its performance, as well as that of its teach-



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Student database: Right from admission day to the student's graduation, every activity is tracked.

"It would be tough to quantify now as we are a few months into the new system, but soon you will see the difference."

Singh's school is one of many that are embracing e-governance to enhance productivity, improve teacher performance, track students better and better educational engagement and administration.

Helping them in the task are firms like MGRM Net Ltd, an IT company with expertise in education e-governance. MGRM works with both private and government schools across the country and helps them make the transition to e-governance platforms. "Teachers earlier

complained about administrative work and how it is affecting their career. Things have started changing... besides improving the education outcomes, I see e-governance aiding the careers of teachers," Singh says.

Alka Sharma, a mathematics teacher at Ahlcon International School in east Delhi, agrees. "Manual intervention in school is reducing, leading to reduced administrative burden on teaching staff," she says, adding that "e-governance has brought ease to teachers, who are now looking to leverage technology in improving their student engagement like customized tutorials, better pedagogy and improved

teaching-learning atmosphere."

What does it do?

"It is multifaceted. Students, management, teachers, government policy requirements and most importantly, education outcomes are tracked, reducing manual intervention of each of the aspects. What you get is quantifiable outcomes," says Partha Mohanty, senior vice-president (technical) at MGRM.

"Data is not as important as data analytics. For a school management, if it gets the analysis and possible implications, it helps in teaching-learning of students, in career growth of staff, in better management of

finances and the overall ecosystem," says Rohini Ahluwalia, chairman of Ahlcon International School.

"We track every possible activity of our students, from both professional and personal points of view. It helps in classifying students into groups so that the below-average can be converted into above-average and more," says Ahluwalia.

Mohanty says with the focus on reaping India's demographic dividend, both government and private school managements are now seeking "transparency, accountability, improved efficiency and universal access to information, and here e-governance is the solution."

How does it work?

Right from admission day to the student's graduation from school, every activity is tracked. "We know what books a student is taking from the library, how their parents have reacted to their performance and why a student's grades have dropped. The outcome: teachers can engage in solving the problems," says Chetna Sabharwal, a teacher at Ahlcon International.

"The system is transparent and we know what our teachers are giving us—marks, remarks and advice," says Shivam Gaba, a Class XI student.

"A couple of months back we realized that a section of students was not doing well in economics, English and geography. We chipped in with remedials for 20-odd days for those students," adds Singh of Kendriya Vidyalaya.

For teachers, the e-governance platform works like an automated performance appraisal system as their activities—academic and non-academic—get logged.

In a school environment, the real-time performance appraisal is a two-way process, says Singh. "E-governance benefits both students and teachers."

Mohanty points out a pain point that e-governance helps address—the reams of data that both state and central governments seek from schools for their various schemes and for policymaking. He says MGRM is now helping schools provide data for programmes like "district information system on education, shaala darpan and e-pathsala" on one platform. "Right now we have put some 1,185 central schools, their 12 lakh students and 50,000 staff on one single e-governance platform," Mohanty says.

With schools adopting e-governance, the Union human resource development ministry is seeking to adopt e-governance via its "shaala darpan" scheme for tracking the performance of students and teachers across all government schools.

India's school sector traditionally suffers from quality issues and several surveys, domestic and international, have pointed to its poor educational outcomes. The government is looking to address some of the ills of the school sector.

Shaala darpan aims to adopt the e-governance platform to track students performance, improve teachers productivity, better parents engagement with school operations. The plan is to have every task from leave management to exam record keeping on a single online platform.

The government is planning to improve student engagement, base education inputs on proper assessment and gap analysis, focusing on mathematics and science from Class I, besides improving school infrastructure.