VIPKID

The Future of Education

A Learning Evolution

2020 Edition

Contents

Foreword

While this eBook focuses quite generally (and broadly) on the future of education as a whole, we want to take a moment to highlight how VIPKid has experienced moving into the future ourselves. As an online education company connecting not only teachers to students, but also two very different cultures from across the world, our experience of the future also lies in the changes that have happened in the past. Sounds like a riddle, we know, but it was summed up beautifully by a speaker at our Journey Conference in July of 2019.

Zak Dychtwald, author of *Young China: How the Restless Generation Will Change Their Country and the World* and CEO of Young China Global Group, presented a riveting account of how he sees the role of VIPKid in the lives of young Chinese. His thoughts put perfectly into words some of the things we always knew but could never easily express.

VIPKid, in Zak's view, fills an important and unique position in the lives of the young Chinese as they grow up into the generation that will lead China. Few people realize that since the year 2000, over 337 million Chinese children have been born—more than the entire population of the United States. As China has experienced growth faster and more radical than any other country in the world over the past few decades, these youth are one of the most mobile-forward, tech-forward generations on the planet, where online learning is an increasingly commonplace occurrence.

But this also gives rise to an interesting point of view. Educators, like teachers on the VIPKid platform, know this generation of young Chinese better than almost anyone else outside of China. Not only that, but, as a window into the outside world for these children (only 9% of Chinese have passports) as well as into U.S. society and culture in particular, the online classroom becomes much more than just a lesson on language. With approximately 180,000 classes happening each day, it means there is cultural exchange occurring at an unprecedented rate.

Think of it: "180,000 ambassadorial moments taking place. Every day."

So as you read this book and think about the future of education, also try to remember the wider and more subtle ways in which education stands to affect the lives of every aspect of our future world.

Zak Dychtwald, author of Young China: How the Restless Generation Will Change Their Country and the World and CEO of Young China Global Group

“What is VIPKid’s goal?”

“To inspire and empower every child for the future”

"And what does the future hold?”

“Glad you asked...”

Introduction

The future is a notoriously difficult thing to predict. Dreams of sandwich synthesizers, flying cars, and diapers that change themselves have instead materialized as more apps than we know what to do with, pseudo-intelligent vacuum cleaners, and a very extensive video library of cats riding those very vacuum cleaners. Nobody could have guessed that.

The role of education is to prepare and train young minds for this emergent future. We send our children to school with the sole intention of helping them succeed later in life. It's paradoxical then that centuries-old principles, methods, and standards would be used to prepare students for a future that is a murky pool full of exciting and life-changing potential … yet murky nonetheless.

Yet education by its very nature is directly linked to the future. It is the driver behind every change we see in the world around us. Electric cars and seedless grapes were by no means the product of an uneducated mind. So, it makes total sense that as the speed of change and access to information continues to defy any logical limits, the education industry undergoes its own shifts and evolution to complement the landscape around us.

Instead of asking how education shapes the future, the question then becomes *How will the future shape education?*

It's a question that's got our excitement levels for the future second only to those of Buzz Lightyear. That's because here at VIPKid we haven't just been riding the wave of digital transformation, we were born on the surfboard. The very nature of the VIPKid global classroom—video streaming technologies, augmented reality, and artificial intelligence—can feel like a science fiction movie at times, even to us! But we also know that what's been happening is far from fiction; in fact, we believe that the changes education is experiencing are still in their infancy. As we vault into the 21st century at speeds that would make an astronaut queasy, we can expect education to undergo even more radical changes that will undoubtedly benefit our students in ways we could never imagine.

Over the years of our development (all six of them), we've had the unique and privileged opportunity to hang out with some of the leading thinkers in education, partner with game-changing companies, and even have a cup of tea with a former First Lady. All in the hopes of understanding a little bit more about where education is heading.

Here's what the immediate future might hold for education …

Part 1:

Principles of Education

Principles of Education

Our principles influence how we deal with the world around us. They are the deep-seated beliefs or fundamental truths that directly impact our behavior and the systems we create. They range from the small and seemingly inconsequential—like eating dessert last—to being universal in scale, like ideals of equality. While we may share and agree on a whole host of principles, various realities create challenges for putting good principles into action.

Looking at education around the world, it's not hard to see how economic realities have occasionally resulted in our principles taking a back seat. Ask a room full of people whether educational opportunities should be equal and you'd be hard-pressed to find someone opposed to the idea. But a brutally honest glance at the global landscape of education will reveal a reality far from equal. A large part of this comes down to access: to good teachers, to good schools, to any teachers, to any schools.

Across the entire spectrum of society, access has provided hurdles of varying degrees to students seeking quality education.

Physical access is an obvious culprit, but access can exist in the ideological sense too. In a conversation with codeSpark CEO and founder Grant Hosford, we discussed some of the ways in which *gender messaging* has inadvertently created a barrier for female students taking the path of learning to code.

Another element influencing how education is delivered is economies of scale. The more standardized that school systems, curriculums, and methods can be, the more children can be reached and taught for less cost. The concept makes sense, but again, the realities facing individual students paint a very different picture. While the majority of students are able to conform to the systems in place (begrudgingly,

in some cases), others are simply unable to. In the United States alone, over 1.2 million high school students drop out every year (one every 26 seconds) and around 25% fail to graduate on time.

But here's the thing. Students don't drop out of "being educated." They drop out of school. They drop out of the system. And they drop out of environments, standards, and methods that are not suitable for them. The reasons are many and can range from emotional issues to financial strains, or even physical or mental disabilities. But how can this be addressed going forward?

The future of education, enabled by massive and fundamental changes in technology, will allow us to rethink and consider what principles can solve these challenges and facilitate education that can help the many, as well as the one. A shift in mindset means moving away from "**all** students **must** receive **this** education" toward "**what** education does **this** student **need**?"

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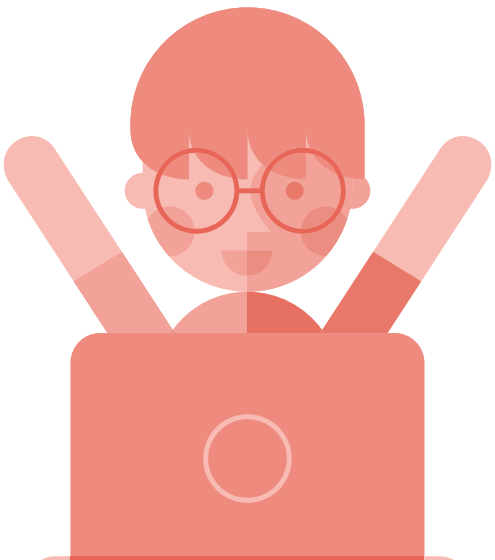


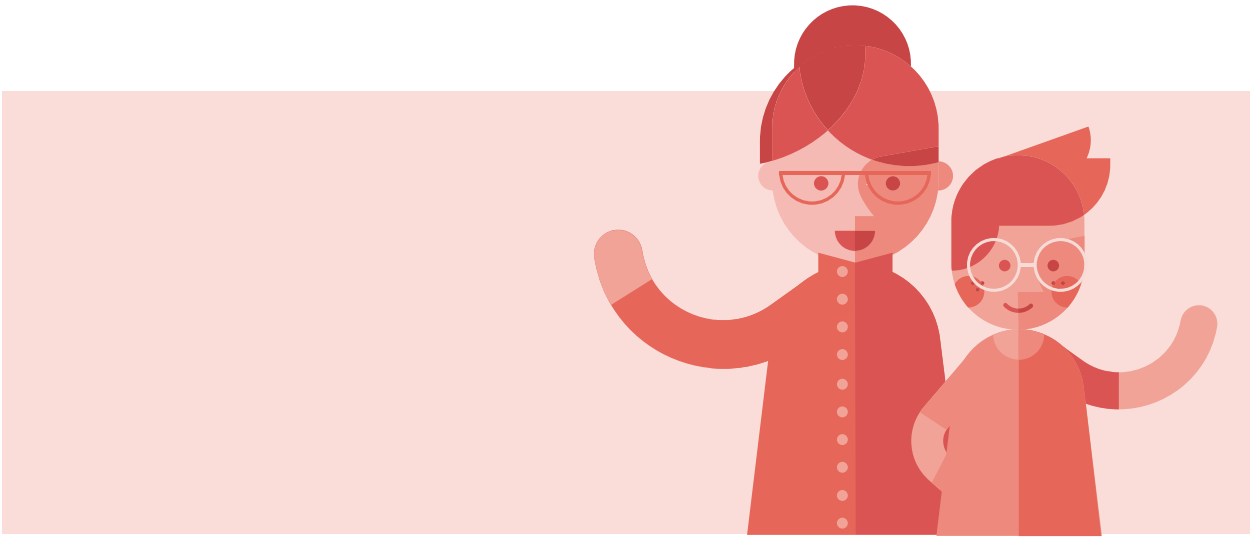
Education as Student-Centered

Aside from that "thing" living in the science lab storeroom, classrooms typically contain only two entities: students and teachers. Logically then, education is commonly classified as student-centered or teacher-centered. At this point, you'd be forgiven for thinking that teacher-centered education doesn't really sound like a thing.

In fact, it's just the opposite. Given the number of semi-attentive, easily distracted, and occasionally asleep students in every class, education has historically taken a teacher-centered approach. This means simply that lessons revolve around the teacher and what the teacher has to say. Controlling a class of thirty-some kids is much easier if their main task is to sit and listen. Recording their progress is also easier if they all conform to the same set of standards, and, of course, a single class *enjoyed by all* is infinitely more manageable than thirty classes enjoyed individually.

But technology has begun to provide the resources and tools to make true *student-centered* learning a reality. By removing the requirement to have a common classroom, or even a common teacher, and enabling one-to-one classes as well as access to numerous different resources on demand, student-centered learning as a principle can become implementable. So if a student-centered approach revolves around the needs of the student, how does this manifest? One answer is through personalization.

Personalization of education goes beyond just shuffling classes and curriculum to facilitate a single student. New technologies mean that personalization can occur at such a focused level that no two



students need to learn the same thing. By prioritizing the needs and experience of the individual student—and developing materials, curriculums, and lessons around those unique requirements—a totally new way of thinking about education can be fostered. That doesn't necessarily mean your child's passing obsession with Lego deserves an education entirely devoted to becoming a master Lego builder. But it does mean that the needs of almost every child can be recognized as distinctly different. Education can be tailored to the individual needs of the child and standardized methods, curriculums, and classrooms become less prominent in favor of student-centered principles.

Guidelines and basic skills will still exist to ensure that a general overarching educational foundation is achieved but, within that, the needs of a single child can be attended to with a degree of personalization previously thought impossible. Imagine a child totally enamored with music. Math may be the furthest thing from that child's mind, but what would happen if they were able to learn about the mathematical frequencies of the pitch of a violin's strings? Or history in the context of musical evolution? Our increasing ability to access information means an equally increasing ability to tailor education in new and surprising ways.

In case you're not convinced, think briefly on how you listen to music. Your streaming service has already predicted what you'd like to listen to, queued it up, and is waiting to play it for you at a moment's notice.

We are entering an era where principles of student-centered education stand to become realized, not only as individual attention, but as education uniquely suited to the interests, abilities and needs of every student.

Spotify and Apple Music have become your personal DJs, whose moods are never too far from your own. This is how extreme personalization has begun to change our lives. The same thing is beginning to happen for education.

We are entering an era where principles of student-centered education stand to become realized, not only as individual attention, but also as education uniquely suited to the interests, abilities, and needs of every student through personalization.

Learning as Additive

Students have the uncanny ability to get under the skin of their teachers with the proficiency of a seasoned professional. But no student quip is more ubiquitous than that unfortunately accurate question (usually dumped unceremoniously into the undeserving laps of mathematics teachers everywhere), which is: *But when will I use this in real life?*

Truth be told, they may not. Standardized education means students are thrown into the world of a cookie-cutter curriculum that not only prevents them from exploring alternative passions, but is often not applicable to their own experiences in life. It is then understandable that learning for some students is like watching paint dry and oftentimes is retained for about the amount of time it takes to hand in that final paper. How many of you reading this remember the basics of geometry, the first three elements of the periodic table, or how mitosis works? Exactly.

The principle of *learning as additive* asserts that knowledge can and should be taught in a manner that contributes to the larger life experiences the student is undergoing. Instead of containing tomes of information that is both foreign and only tangentially related to their everyday life, education stands to supplement students' lives in ways that make it useful, interesting, and applicable. The result is that information is absorbed more readily and retained for longer. Maybe even forever.

In the context of foreign language learning, Dr. Jeanine Ntihirageza, professor and coordinator of TESOL at Northeastern Illinois University, sat down with VIPKid and spoke about the need for culturally additive learning in the classroom. You can watch her interview here.

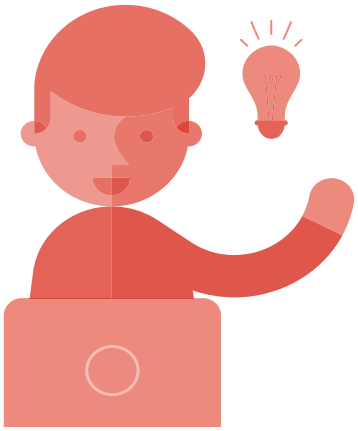
Employing principles of additive learning stands to fundamentally change the amount of information and knowledge that students are able to learn and retain. Information becomes more meaningful if contextualized to the unique circumstances and situations of the students being taught it.

Emergent Learning

How many of you learned the skills needed to succeed in your current job while you were in school? Maybe half of you received the technical basics that you would build upon in college and then later in the workplace. The other half of you would have left school with foundational knowledge of some "stuff," while the bulk of your career-based expertise was learned in something akin to all of high school crammed into the first panicked months of your new job.

This is not to say that the education taught in schools is useless, but rather that in many cases it lacks the practical link to jobs that exist today. Because educational reforms happen at a snail's pace compared to changes in the world around us, entire industries are alive today that were unheard of even a decade ago—and yet still aren't taught in schools. Implementation experts, scrum masters, data scientists, and artificial intelligence reliability engineers are all roles that are very real and very much in demand. So how do we teach to that?

In order to embrace change and complement it, learning must become as agile and emergent as the changes around it. Learning a language used to be a choice between Spanish, French, or, for the most ambitious among us, ancient Latin. Nowadays, language learning can be anything from Mandarin, Russian, or Arabic to Python, Ruby, or Rust (yup, those are all languages... except only three of them are spoken).



Instead of building reactive curricula to try to keep up with a world moving faster than a chronically late hummingbird, the future of education stands to embrace a more proactive approach, where the subject matter and learning outcomes are fluid and can move with the times, in an emergent manner. The principle of emergent learning then is an embrace of change, just like a valley embraces a running stream—guiding, not hindering.

Improved access to information and the technologies to effectively communicate and demonstrate how this information is applied in the world mean students will not only be able to learn in a manner suited to them, but in a manner that is complementary to the flow of innovations and developments taking place around them. The principle of emergent learning, coupled with student-centered learning at its core, will continue to shape how new technology is implemented not just in the classroom, but in the entire spectrum of education.

Part 2:

Methods of Education

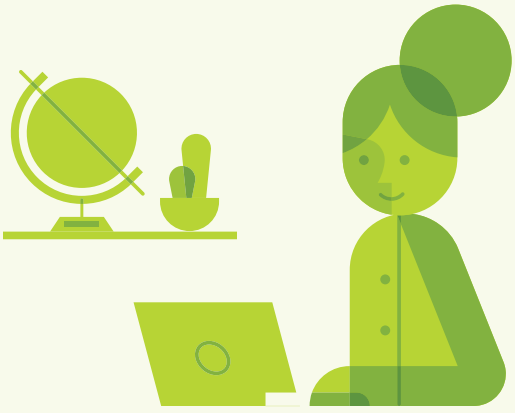
Methods of Education

If the way in which we think about education shifts, so too must the methods we use to teach. Preaching a modern, student-centered approach while trying to force-feed a 1960s textbook about "new-age economics" to a room full of kids born in the new millennium doesn't really make worlds of sense. So how will methods of education evolve and change to suit new ways of thinking about education?

A student-centered approach basically says that the class—be it individual- or group-based—is driven from the students' experience. But that does not mean the teacher can toss the chalk into the bin and clock out for an early retirement. Just the opposite. In fact, you may even argue that the role of the teacher becomes more important than it's ever been. In place of reciting the gripping contents of a textbook, teachers will become an active ally in the learning experience of their students.

Personalized learning means that every student's experience will be slightly different, as will the challenges they encounter and types of support they may require. The teacher then becomes a critical component to ensuring the student is able to navigate this world effectively. Methods of learning will encompass a broad range of continually evolving activities and practices, but we think three of the most prominent will be:

- A Rise in Mentorship
- Decentralized and One-to-One Learning
- An Increase in Project-Based Learning



Rise of Mentorship

A mentor is a trusted advisor. Whereas a teacher may invoke varying degrees of either adoration or fear, a mentor is always an ally. Rather than telling you what to do, a mentor takes you under their wing and imparts wisdom and guidance while supporting *your* journey. In a nutshell, the world would be a better place if we all had a mentor.

As curriculums and technologies begin to adapt to the needs of individuals, the need for teachers to act as guardians of peace in what can feel more like some of our family holiday gatherings, but is commonly referred to as a classroom, begins to disappear (much to the delight of teachers everywhere, we suspect). And in its place the role of the facilitator or mentor starts to form. No matter how far technology has come, a young mind will always require guidance. A teacher fills this role, where interaction with the student is meaningful, targeted, and personalized to the individual journey that student is undertaking.

The teacher will be able to refocus their energy toward identifying the strengths and personality traits of their students and ensure that their learning experience is adjusted accordingly. In a sense, this responsibility is paramount to the success of a student with the world at their fingertips. In the same way that too many choices can be paralyzing, being able to access infinite amounts of information presents all sorts of new challenges to students with young and impressionable minds. The teacher stands to be their guiding light in navigating this field of obstacles.

Teachers are also able to keep track of changes in the larger environment—technological, career-related, or even societal—and help customize the learning experience of each student to align with these changes in a way that is both helpful and unique to the individual. Just like you rely on those you trust to recommend a good surgeon—something you never want to be careless about—students will look to their teachers to ensure that the decisions they make are relevant and helpful to their personal development.

Decentralized and One-to-One Learning

Fancy words for a simple concept: a rise in remote learning and a shift away from purely campus-based models. Actually, this is hardly a new trend. Over 25 years ago, the first online-only university appeared in Spain, and since then almost every major academic institution either offers online courses or contributes to various online learning initiatives.

As we move into new modes of education, it makes sense that remote learning will continue to develop and, in some cases, even replace location-based learning entirely. Following on from the idea of personalized learning made possible by increased access, remote learning opens up doors for students and teachers to connect without having to navigate hurdles that would otherwise prevent them from being physically in the same space.

But remote learning is far more than just an excuse to avoid having to deal with the school drop-off zone at rush hour. It can provide a host of benefits that directly impact and contribute to personalized, student-centered learning at a much grander scale. Remote learning means that a biology prodigy in Kenya has the possibility of being tutored by a global expert in the field based in Norway. It means that a child with physical disabilities preventing them from attending a regular school environment can access the same education, and even sit in on the very same classes, without ever having to leave their home.

Remote learning changes the very nature of access to education. It's not uncommon for families to strive to live in neighborhoods with access to good schools or go to any lengths to secure a spot for their child in a school that promises a better education—something most parents have experienced firsthand. But remote learning breaks down these socioeconomic barriers to education.

The second aspect of this is a rise in one-to-one learning. To be fair, currently there is nothing standing in the way of one-to-one education done in person, except that it is impractical at a large scale. Either a teacher travels from one student to the next while fully embracing the glories of a life lived in traffic, or students take turns visiting a teacher—like a very inefficient school. But the proliferation of high-quality and inexpensive video streaming services has created a new means for one-to-one education to take place at the mere click of a button.

Although private tutoring is still not accessible or economically feasible for everyone, the trend points toward equal opportunity for one-to-one mentorship at a scale the world has never seen before.

Increase In Project-Based Learning (PBL)

Project-based learning follows that age-old precept of learning by doing. The idea has existed for well over a century (popularized by John Dewey when he began promoting it 1897) but only recently has begun gaining popularity as less of an "alternative" learning method to something that has a deserved place in the mainstream. Through this method, students acquire knowledge through exploring real-world problems.

Think for a moment about the educational experience of babies. They learn themselves that the floor is harder than their head or that biting a cat's tail results in almost none of the outcomes they expected. We don't tell them these things, but rather they learn through direct experience. Not only that, but once these lessons are learned, they are very hard to unlearn. None of us have ever forgotten that the floor is harder than our head … we have accepted it as an indisputable fact (learned through painful experience). Now think about how long it took to learn that heartbreak heals with time or that money won't buy you happiness or that drying your socks in the toaster is a terrible idea … no matter how many times someone told you, it was the actual experience that drove the point home in the end. The point is, we learn better not by listening, but by doing.

Project-based learning allows learners to immerse themselves in the content they are studying by providing them with hands-on opportunities to experience the subject matter. This means that textbook knowledge can be supplemented and applied in situations that are both relevant and interesting to the student. Technology is the conduit that increases the ability for this type of learning to take place. Using technologies like augmented reality, students can learn about ancient Rome and then experience it taking place around them. Molecular science abandons the abstract and becomes something they can see, touch, and experience.

Typically, project-based learning includes:

- **A challenge or driving question**
- **A requirement to understand certain content or skills**
- **A need to develop critical thinking, problem solving or collaborative skills**
- **And finally, feedback on what was learnt**

Methods like this mean that general education can occur in a student-centered manner by packaging content and learning experiences in ways that suit the needs and capture the attention of the individual student.

Part 3:

Technology

Technology

When we think about the future, we almost always think about technology. We think about cars that drive themselves, spaceships taking us on vacation to distant worlds, or just simple things like car keys that find themselves. Technology and the future are like shrimps and prawns: We know they're different, but it's not always easy explaining how they are different. That is because technology is the great enabler. While the future may consist of a cacophony of ideologies, behaviors, and activities, technology plays a huge part in making these ways of life available to us.

So how will technology enable the future of education?

So how will technology enable the future of education?

Imagine this situation for a moment: Emma is in the middle of a biology class. She's learning about the brain functions of a mouse. In front of her is a plastic model of a mouse. She looks at the mouse through her iPad and it comes alive. Zooming in, she can see every synapse connecting in its brain, every molecule moving. In real time. The information she is learning is at the cutting edge of science, and most of it is being streamed directly from a lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where real scientists have agreed to share their findings with students. Emma has ambitions to become a behavioral scientist with a focus on the brain. At the end of class, Emma says goodbye to her mentor. The mouse disappears and she's back in her mountain cabin in Switzerland. It's 9 a.m. and the snow outside is fresh. Emma plans to go skiing with her friends after breakfast.

The story reads like science fiction. But nothing in it doesn't exist today. The technologies at our disposal, while not all commercially available, already have the potential to fundamentally change the way we interact with the world around us.

The Proliferation of e-Learning Platforms

If you've ever watched a YouTube video to learn how to unblock a drain or tie a tie, then you already participate in a form of e-learning. But as education continues to decentralize and globalize, formal e-learning platforms will also continue to develop and proliferate so as to serve the needs of every educational niche known to us. Did you know the most popular "how-to" video on the internet is "How to Kiss"? That's right, e-learning platforms are already solving life's most embarrassing problems one peck at a time.

Platforms like VIPKid, Coursera, and Udemy provide students with the tools necessary to engage in effective learning online. Access to teachers, content, and the structure or guidance required to successfully navigate the content are just the basics of what these platforms provide. Education can be customized through the development of online libraries, tutorials, or exercises supported by the framework of a platform. Online platforms also allow the "classroom" to become truly mobile, since access can be obtained through almost any device with an internet connection (which, if we're being honest, is basically everything and the kitchen sink at this point).

Another effect of the e-learning platform is that age becomes irrelevant. Students of all ages and walks of life can engage in similar journeys, access the same teachers, or develop the same interests. Security measures will always be in place to ensure that students' safety takes precedence, and some things have to be taught differently to people of different ages, but the absence of a physical learning environment also means the acceptance of a wider range of learners—increasing access to education even more.

Online learning platforms provide the solutions to many of the practical problems that come with the ideas of student-centered, emergent, and personalized learning. Since these principles and the methods that accompany them require technological enablement to be realized, online platforms stand to fill at least part of that role. Peer-to-peer learning, one-to-one instruction, access to Ivy League–level courses, and on-demand education are all already facilitated through platforms that exist today. Can you imagine how much more the future will hold?

Augmented and Virtual Reality

Virtual reality (VR) tends to get a bad rap because it alludes to the idea of escaping what is real. But by setting aside thoughts of a secluded dystopian society where everyone wears a headset and is slowly digested by their couch, the possibilities of how it can aid education are truly inspiring.

Augmented reality (AR), a version of virtual reality, simply creates a computer-generated image onto a person's view of the real world. This can occur through a phone, tablet, or even glasses. Again, these technologies are not reserved for the distant future.

Already today, museums around the world allow visitors to experience the past in ways never before possible. By holding up your phone to different exhibits, fossils can move, machines can be dissected, and sarcophagi turned transparent. Now imagine the possibilities in the classroom. Today, online classes are already supplemented by images or scenes that appear to live on the screen beside the teacher. These assist the teacher in explaining new topics, act as interactive elements for the students to engage with, or provide different ways for students with learning disabilities to digest new topics.

Yet the possibilities that the future may hold are even more fascinating. Learning about prehistoric times can be accompanied by virtual field trips into the late Mesozoic Era. Students don't need to imagine the scale of a brontosaurus if it's towering right above them. Even without the use of time travel, virtual experiences allow students to experience and interact with landmarks, cultures, and traditions from all around the world, right from their classroom. Every frog will breathe a croak of relief when biology class no longer needs real specimens and can instead benefit from a virtual frog—one that doesn't even leave a mess on the desk at the end of class.

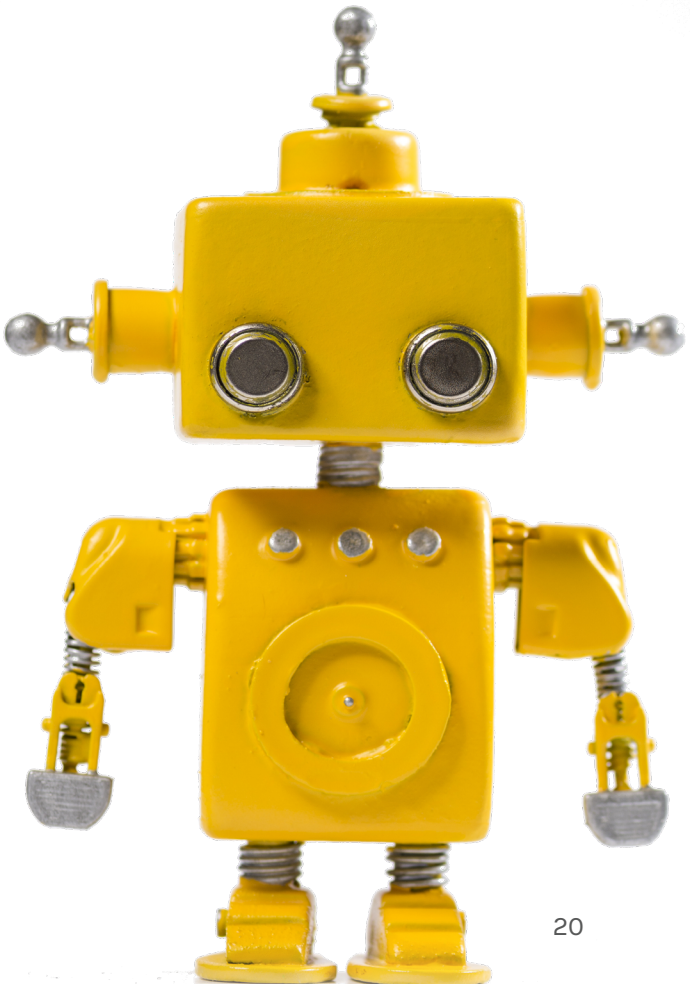
Then, of course, there is the application of augmented reality for students with physical disabilities. Take the example of a deaf child who would otherwise be at a disadvantage in a traditional classroom. Instructions from the teacher could be complemented in real time by a virtual teacher translating into sign language, standing right next to the real teacher, and visible only to that student.

Artificial Intelligence

Another term that sounds like it belongs in a Schwarzenegger-backed film franchise, artificial intelligence (AI) is already making strides in the improvement of our lives in almost all industries. In education, the ability of AI to rapidly understand and adapt to the needs of students will enable much of what we have talked about so far.

Personalization of education sounds like an ideal that makes sense, but it places a huge burden on the teacher to try to tailor the educational experience to the unique needs of each student. That is where AI steps in. AI enables the hyper-personalization of education to an extent not otherwise possible. By mapping and understanding the ways in which students engage with their lessons, AI can help us better adjust curriculum, teaching styles, and content to suit the speed, learning capacity, and personality of each individual student.

Smart interaction with technology also assists in a child's learning progress. Taking language learning as an example, conversational practice with a teacher may go only as far as the teacher has time for; outside of that, a student must be content with listening to recordings or talking to a mirror. But advances in AI-driven virtual assistants mean that intelligent and natural conversation can take place at any time. Not only that, but AI has the potential to learn what areas of the conversation are more challenging for the student and adjust the conversation to focus on them.



Hyper-personalization and learning analytics will become invaluable aids in education as new principles and methods are applied to 21st-century learning. AI as an enabler, just like virtual and augmented reality, will fundamentally change the learning experience for teachers and students alike.

Part 4:

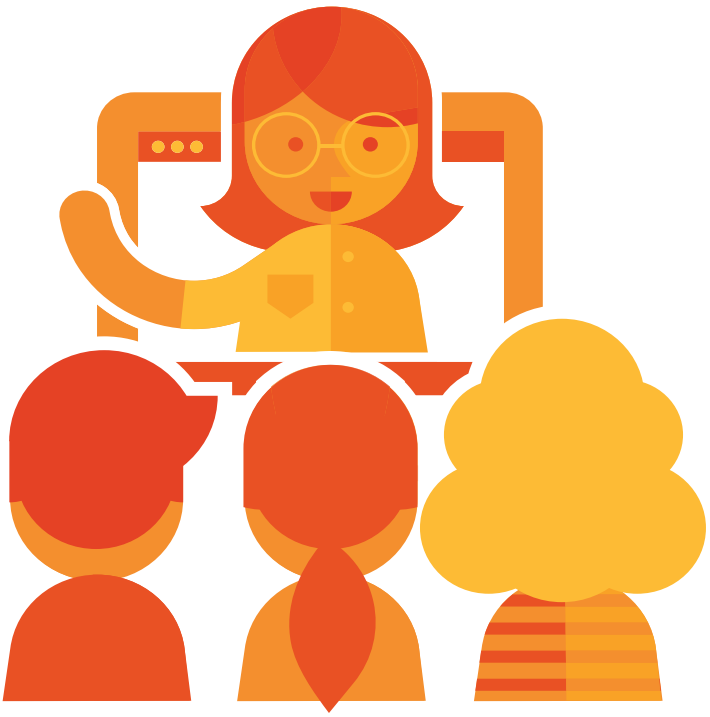
VIPKid and the Future

VIPKid and the Future

As we mentioned at the start of this book, VIPKid is on a journey that complements many of the changes currently experienced by Chinese youth, as well as technological progress as a whole. VIPKid was never a school that transitioned into online education, but instead was born out of the idea in the first place. The concept of one-to-one education in an online environment that is responsive to the needs of the student has always been central to our vision from day one. Yet that does not mean the future doesn't still have the capacity to surprise, shock, and delight us on a daily basis.

As we continue to grow as an organization, so too are we finding ways to think out of the box, to approach problems from different angles, and to always redefine where the boundaries of education lie. This occasionally includes crazy ideas like adopting pandas (her name is Mei Lun) or launching satellites into space (they didn't let us paint it orange), but more often takes the form of totally reimagining the role of education in society at large (though students on the VIPKid platform do now have more material on pandas and space).

The future for us will always be technological progress—in some cases, we even help drive this change—but it is also an evolution of cultural exchange, finding new ways of contributing to society and connecting people far beyond the already invisible walls of the online classroom.



Not Education-as-Usual

VIPKid has always tried to approach education by thinking from the student's perspective, and much of that has stemmed from our own Founder and CEO Cindy Mi's personal experiences. As a child, Cindy was on the receiving end of a teacher not believing she could amount to much. In short, her future was being thrown into doubt by the very person who was supposed to prepare her for it. But in Cindy's case, the result was not a student who accepted a below-average lot in life; instead, this experience became a driving force behind her personal mission to disrupt how education should serve students. Doubts about her own future became her vision for a much bigger future—that of education.

Today, this has manifested in VIPKid's overarching mission to "inspire and empower every child for the future."

So how have we gone about doing this? The first thing is recognizing that education affects different people differently. Not only does each child have individual needs, but so too does every teacher have different lives under different circumstances. On top of that, the engagement between teacher and student is also far more than a simple meeting of the minds—every class becomes a cultural exchange between people living thousands of miles apart. In building an online classroom for the future, all of these things needed to be taken into account.

Using the tools and means provided by modern technology, coupled with contemporary methods of education, we set out to build a platform where individual, personalized, and student-centered education could thrive and where teachers could put 100% of their time and energy into helping young minds learn without the distractions of unnecessary administration or outdated practices. The result has been an ever-changing environment where over 100,000 teachers are able to impart knowledge to almost a million children—on an individual basis.

As Zak Dychtwald alluded to at our Journey Conference in Las Vegas, this also means that every day there are approximately 180,000 "ambassadorial moments" where cultural exchange takes place between a generation that will grow up to lead one of the most powerful economies in the world and their role models from half a world away. On *both* sides of the screen, we find people actively learning about each other's cultures, sharing norms and traditions, changing perceptions, or just making friends.

We believe that the future of education—along with all the things already spoken about in this book—is rooted in the crossing of cultures and learning from one another.

Programs and Initiatives

While the online VIPKid classroom undergoes its own changes and improvements, with new lessons, features, and means to exchange value, VIPKid is also continuously looking for opportunities to connect education to adjacent initiatives or larger societal goals. Some of the initiatives and partnerships launched over the past few years include:

The Rural Education Project

The Rural Education Project was founded with the purpose of bringing new educational opportunities to students and schools in underprivileged and rural areas and which have limited access to the internet. What began as a simple pilot project in 2017 has blossomed into a thriving program with hundreds of teachers providing English classes to about 30,000 students in over 1,000 classrooms. And, as you'd likely expect at this point, every class happens remotely with teachers logging in from every conceivable corner of the world.

More recently, teachers on VIPKid's teaching platform have also been offered the opportunity to contribute to the program by donating tokens earned in their regular student interactions to help the initiative. As of November 2019, the **Token Heroes** project had already seen over 6,000 teachers contribute, making more than 300 classes possible for the beneficiaries of the Rural Education Project.

Programs and Initiatives cont.

VIPTeach

VIPTeach is a non-profit founded by Cindy to make a difference in the lives of all teachers in North America. As part of its mission to empower teachers, the **Teacher Courage Award** was created. The award recognizes educators who have maintained a steadfast commitment to their students despite severe physical, emotional, or financial hardship. The candidates are nominated by teachers on the platform, but the award is open to any educator. Myranda was one of our recipients in 2019.

Programs and Initiatives cont.

Journey Conference

The VIPKid Journey Conference is another way of rethinking the experience of educators in the new world. Online teaching means that new ways of interacting with peers and other professionals both in person and online need to be facilitated. The conference, which happens throughout the year in various U.S. cities, is a way for teachers to congregate, share, and experience development opportunities in an environment that celebrates their successes and facilitates their passion for education. While providing the opportunity to bring influential people together and have something of a celebration, it also supplements an existing and robust community of offline teacher meet-ups that have been taking place around the world for the past few years. Fears of isolation and an absence of offline interaction have effectively been challenged with these increasingly popular moments of peer-to-peer engagement. But, more importantly, these meetings take place not because they are mandated, but because professionals in the field are actively self-organizing purely for the sake of developing new relationships, creating support systems, and simply having fun.

UNICEF Kid Power and VIPKid

A partnership with UNICEF Kid Power saw a brand-new initiative for the VIPKid classroom, where teachers were encouraged to get more active for the benefit of vulnerable communities. UNICEF Kid Power is an online platform free for US educators to use, connecting students' everyday activity to real-world impact, and we were thrilled to introduce this program to VIPKid teachers.

This was an important step for VIPKid, as an offline and established way of helping the community was adapted and adopted in the online classroom. As we move forward, we see opportunities like these becoming even more frequent and embedded in the online learning experience.

These are just some of the initiatives that VIPKid has been undertaking as we explore what it means to be an educator in the 21st century. And they are just the beginning.

Conclusion

That brings to a close this brief and hopefully insightful exploration into what the future may hold for education. Our intention was to get you thinking about how current trends will begin to shape the lives of our future generations and also about how endlessly exciting, and excitingly endless, opportunities for the future of education are.

After all is said and done, we maintain that education stands to have the most powerful impact on the successes of the entire human race. Cultural exchange, access to information, and personalized education all speak to preparing our children for a world that requires critical thinkers who are sensitive to the changes taking place around them and who are well prepared for the challenges that lie ahead.

Until we are able to plug our head into a socket and upload everything there is to know, we'll continue to reshape, redefine, and reimagine the role of education in the world...

"Inspiring and empowering our children for the future."