

Coding and Kids- How to connect these two paradigms?

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According to the New Education Policy of India, coding will be compulsory for students from 6 to onwards. This announcement has raised quite a spark among parents and teachers since it is a skill that requires a deep logical reasoning calibre which is not generally thought to be ingrained in a child at such a tender age. This notion is prevalent, particularly in our society. This idea of coding as a compulsory subject has been borrowed from the west. How did western kids get used to it then?

Coding and kids in West:

For Western countries learning coding in childhood is already a norm since the 1960s-70s. From Bill Gates to Elon Musk, a computer was their childhood buddy, and with lots of persistence, they learned coding, created games, and had fun. I usually like to read memoirs, biographies, and interviews of programmers. I was surprised that all these western

computer geeks had the same commonality regarding learning to code. The power of new technology had always amused them since childhood and they share the same thrill at creating something new on their devices with their coding skills. There is a memoir called “Just for Fun” written by the creator of the operating system Linux and the creator of open-source software Git, Linus Torvalds. He reminisced how a

scientific calculator of his grandfather grew interest in his mind for devices and how he saved money from his scholarships to buy a Sinclair QL,

a personal computer model everyone was craving for during that time. Another inspiring fact is that compared to today’s plethora of free, easily accessible resources for learning coding during the 60s-70s curious kids had to solely depend on manuals for learning coding. Most of the time, they toyed with the language codes did manipulations and thus learnt by making errors and trying again repeatedly. As obvious



kids with a knack in maths can easily learn this skill as exemplified by a math prodigy like Terence Tao, US math Olympiad team coach Po Shen Lo and so on.

Current Scenario:

Today's kids know how to open and watch cartoon videos on YouTube and how to voice search items on Flipkart, even from the age of 3-4. So, there can be an argument: why not utilise this tech-savvy kids' interest in devices to learn something logical like programming?

But the recent white hat junior scam proves how pressurising kids from a young age to learn coding (by luring them by saying that they will become like Sundar Pichai or they could meet Bill Gates, and earn packages worth crores) could lead to such colossal harm for the kids' precious childhood time.



Resources

Anyway, there are some amazing resources and initiatives for instilling curiosity into kids' minds for coding. Some of those are:

➤ MIT has developed a kids-friendly programming language called

Scratch. Where syntax is animals' pictures.

➤ Chris Ferrie's baby series, for example, a neural network for babies, blockchain for babies and many more trendy topics books for babies.

➤ There are book series like python for kids, machine learning for kids by No Starch Press.

➤ Linda Liukas and her children's book "Hello Ruby" on the programming language ruby on rails. Her TED talk entitled "Poetry of programming" will indeed inspire parents and teachers to have a base for teaching kids basic coding.

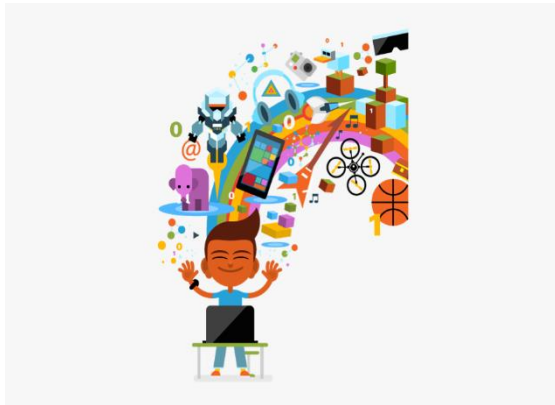
➤ The popular app Brilliant also provides kids-friendly, engaging content on computers, puzzles, maths, reasoning, and many more. Subscription fees are also reasonable.

Remarks

Some days ago, I bought the National Olympiad Foundation exercise series on five subjects for class 2 for my nephew. The computer book's questions are primarily about recognizing various computer parts for specific tasks like storage, video,

gaming, and so on, which indicates the book's writers already assume that a kid should adapt to a computer and its tremendous tasks right after being born (!)

The most intriguing aspect is that parents nowadays willingly hand their smartphones to their kids so they won't disturb their parents'



work. This raises another concern should a kid feel bored? If he feels bored, then is it always the best decision to put on TV and watch cartoon or open YouTube on his

parents' devices and watch Doraemon? A distinguished child psychotherapist Adam Phillips shares a conversation with a kid in one of his books. The kid tells him that he was never allowed to be bored at home since his parents always keep him busy. So, the ultimate questions left to the readers are, in the context mentioned above, how should we as guardians or parents or teachers, treat the teaching of coding skills to the kids? Should we buy them computers at an early age like the western countries and make them hooked to it to make them just busy or learn something logical? Or should we encourage the kids to create games or visuals on it and be part of the process by co-learning with them? What about its repercussions? I am still inconclusive about it.
