

MoU between AU and Unesco for digital game-based learning

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Prayagraj: With an aim to study the impact of online games on children, the Centre of Behavioural and Cognitive Sciences (CBCS), Allahabad University, has signed an MoU with Unesco Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP), New Delhi, for a collaborative research on digital game-based interventions for social emotional learning (SEL).

Unesco MGIEP is a global reference for social Emotional Learning programs and CBCS is one of the few centres pursuing research in the field of cognitive-affective development in the country.

"The centre has initiated a project on digital game-based intervention on pro-sociality (pro-social behaviour is a voluntary act to help, cooperate, or rescue others while also protecting one-

self) and interactive modules on social emotional skills for children and adolescents," said head of CBCS, Prof Bhoomika R Kar.

"Development of prosociality and trust in children is an important skill for promoting mental health, social-cognitive-emotional development, academic performance and general happiness. Prosocial behaviour is an important aspect of SEL framework," she added.

Government has made efforts to implement SEL in schools to build the social-emotional strength, positive and stronger relationships, to promote empathy, compassion and kindness. Unesco MGIEP is working towards these initiatives focusing on digital video game-based interventions, she said.

At CBCS, faculty and students have been conducting research projects in schools using the game-based interventions to enhance pro-sociality and trust

in adolescents, the age when empathy, stronger friendships, emotional distress, anger issues are a concern.

"We have found that using such 'positive technology' and video games, designed for social-emotional skills, are an effective medium to train a child with complex skills in a more implicit manner," said the cognitive expert. In collaboration with Unesco MGIEP, CBCS faculty and students have tested, validated and have found the use of such digital games effective using experimental paradigms and are continuing to do so, she added.

It will be interesting to observe if this effect translates in day-to-day behaviour, says the experts of the centre who would investigate the same. The MoU will benefit the centre and AU in terms of collaborative research with impact on society at large, they added.