

REVOLUTIONISING INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

More people getting educated with the combination of technology and ever increasing population would lead to the reduction in worth of a degree. A few years back, if you had a degree you had a job; now the scenario has changed. In today's world having a degree doesn't guarantee you a job. Academic inflation has become very prevalent and is the bitter truth of the current education system. Academic inflation is a process in which the academic qualifications for the same job increase considerably over time. For example, it was mandatory for an accountant to have a B.Com degree two years back, but now for the same post having an M.Com degree is a must. This is happening in all other sectors too. It indicates the whole structure of the education system is flawed and we need to radically rethink our standards of intelligence.

Keywords: *Academic Inflation, Academic Qualifications, Education System, Standards of Intelligence.*

Introduction

Our education system is primarily based on the idea of academic ability. The reason for this is the lack of public systems of education before the 19th century. All the systems of education came into existence to meet the growing demands of industrialization during the industrial revolution. The hierarchy of education is rooted in the idea that most useful subjects for work are at the top. Today academic ability has dominated our view of intelligence because the universities designed the system in that way. The whole system of public education around the world is a protracted process of entrance into universities. The consequence is that many brilliant, creative people think that they are not good enough because the things they were good at wasn't valued at school. We cannot afford to go on this same path now, as this is indirectly killing the genius in the student. 'If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree it will live its whole life thinking it is stupid.'¹ A study conducted by UNESCO concluded that in next twenty-five years more people worldwide would be graduating through education than since the beginning of history².

Problems with the Education System

- **Discouraging Mistakes**

The primary problem with the education system is that it is based on the principle of reducing the mistakes made by students. There is a lot of emphasis being laid on achieving perfection. Right from the very beginning when we just start schooling we are taught to avoid making mistakes. The school has hindered the development of creativity in students and stunted their growth by suppressing their willingness to make mistakes and learn from them. The reinforcement of mistakes ultimately destroys creativity and spontaneity of the student. A person can never get an original thought without being open to the idea of making mistakes. The current system focuses on pointing out mistakes; mistakes are considered to make you a failure. When growing up we are taught to avoid mistakes at all costs instead of being innovative and coming up with something new. As Albert Einstein correctly said, "anyone who has never made a mistake, has never tried anything new".³

Children are born with huge talents which are destroyed by the elaborate education system. When children start schooling they are not afraid of being wrong, the education system and the environment in schools eliminates this behavior. A child's willingness to make a mistake is not knowing that he is necessarily wrong, but doing it without the shame, fear or guilt of being wrong. As a child, there

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is no right and wrong. As the years pass and schooling gets intense, student pay for the mistakes they make. As a child, you have no intention of impressing someone with your ability to avoid making mistakes. The education system commands that the path to achieving academic abilities is by following rules, conforming to social norms, and learning old ideas through repetition, standardized testing and keeping them busy. Ultimately education is dooming the future of advancement and innovation through the stigmatization of mistakes, creative intuition, reinforcing standardization and uniformity. Creativity sums up to being able to think out of the box and to think outside the box, one has to be open to the idea of making mistakes. The famous artist Pablo Picasso said, "Every child is an artist; the problem is staying an artist when you grow up".⁴

- **Killing Creativity**

Education system today kills creativity by its mechanical way of working. For example, in schools, subjects like art and craft are not given the same weight as subjects like science and maths, clearly signifying the superiority of one over the other. In order to let creativity, grow, the system has to reinforce its importance. The education system is far too rigid to foster creativity. People need to think outside the circle and not just outside the box. Thinking outside the box is a metaphor used to describe creative and innovative thinking. The term originated in context to the very popular nine dots puzzle. The only solution to the puzzle was to use the space outside the box. The reason why just thinking outside the box won't do the trick is that it is far from creative. When thinking outside the box the problem is well-defined, with a linear goal and a clear solution; which is far from true. The solution to this is thinking outside the circle of conformism that we have adapted to.

- **Standardized Testing**

Standardized testing is the primary factor destroying the creative genius of students around the world. There are quite a few advantages to uniform testing methods which justify the fact that it is still in use. It makes grading easy and less tedious, it also ensured that grades are easily comparable. It also ensures every student gets an equal opportunity to excel and there is no bias at all in the system. Though few advantages are indisputable, others may be easily refuted.

The results of standardized exams can be recorded easily and the scores are valid and reliable. These tests are given to all students under similar circumstances as possible which make the whole system of examinations fair to all sections of students. Many people argue that exams expose the strengths and weaknesses of the student and thus help in outlining areas where improvement is necessary. This is a very trivial advantage because the exams are conducted testing only a very narrow range of topics, to begin with. It is also believed that exams are a way of testing the students' progress over time after making changes in the curriculum every year, but there is no evidence to prove that there is any such effective progress. It is also argued that exams show the student's preparedness for a new syllabus or academic venture, but in actuality, it just shows which students are better test takers and who are not.

The standardized examination is very limited in their options of when they take the exam and testing a student during a small window of time doesn't account for non-cognitive factors like hunger, peace of mind, anxiety, hunger and panic; this renders exams useless. Moreover, the results of such exams are useless in determining effective modifications to the scope of the syllabus. When students are taking any test they come to the examination hall with preconceived notions which is counter-productive.

- **Reservation based on Caste**

Reservation in India owes its existence to Dr. B. R Ambedkar. He has framed the Indian Constitution and introduced reservation in India. The framers of the education system in India perceived that students belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, the so-called backward classes are inadequately represented in educational institutions. To get them to par with the others there are some seats reserved for them in educational institutions. According to me, it is paradoxical that in a democratic country we are still imposing the same conditions such as reservation, which prevail in a country governed by a monarch.

Reservations based on caste though were logical during the early years of our independence but make no sense now. I don't think that caste decides the economics condition of a person. A person belonging to the higher caste can be poor too and therefore find education unaffordable. Reservation based on caste is outdated and requires updating. Reservation was brought into the picture to help the oppressed classes to be educated and uplift themselves. Today education for all is a necessity. This aimed at bringing education to the ones in need who cannot access it otherwise.

The only way reservation makes sense is if it is based on the economic condition of the student in question and not the economic conditions of their ancestors. When the reservation was introduced it made sense because all the people from the backward castes were economically backward too. Reservation in educational institutions was introduced to empower the underprivileged but the right is enjoyed by undeserving candidates too. People have figured out ways to get reserved seats in educational institutions by changing their castes. To avail benefits of reservation, some people obtain a fake caste certificate by underhand means.

It is extremely wrong to reserve seats for higher education; an undeserving student of backward class with a low score secures admission at universities whereas another student from the general category does not. For example, students getting admission in medical colleges due to the reservation, are not able to cope with the excessive stress which comes with the studies. Moving a step ahead, if the student from the reserved category become a doctor in spite of securing bad grades, won't be able to serve the society as a good doctor.

- **Stress**

The problem with the current system of education is the amount of stress incorporated into it. Stress is a state of physiological or psychological imbalance due to the difference between what is demanded and what the individual is able to provide. Stress can be both constructive and destructive in nature. When the stress in the education system is low it results in poor productivity in students, boredom, and absenteeism. Low levels of stress results in the students being apathetic and not motivated enough to do their job. High levels of stress are counter-productive and lead to tension, anxiety, low performance, lack of motivation. The key here is to burden the students just enough stress to keep them motivated to give their best. The problem with this is every student has a different stress threshold and is very subjective. Stress threshold is the level of stress that a person can handle before negative feelings about stress occurs and has an adverse effect on performance.

The system puts stress on students so as to keep them motivated and working. Students at all times are under stress to perform well in academics. Examinations test the student's ability to handle large amounts of stress and their performance under pressure. Students are constantly under the burden to pay back the loans taken by them. There is a burden on students to perform better than others. With an increasingly pressurized, competitive and market-driven system of education the stress on students is increasing day by day. The students are facing acute symptoms of stress like depression, anorexia, burnout, panic attacks, hypertension, and obesity.

Discussion

The society can improve the quality of education but people need to start at the core of the system. In the book 'Breakpoint and Beyond', the authors George Land and Beth Jarman discuss how creativity is disappearing slowly due to the prevalent system. They conducted a study with 1600 children between ages three and five⁵ These children were given eight different tests assessing divergent thinking, lateral thinking, and creativity. The questions in this study were open-ended and required unapparent answers. The test included questions like "How many ways can this paperclip be used?". Over 98% of the children scored at a level equivalent to a creative genius. Five years later, the same children were re-tested. Only an astonishing 32% scored in the same category. After five years, the children were re-tested for the third time and less than 10% scored in the creative genius category. The authors then conducted a similar test on 200,000 adults age 25 and older, less than 2% scored in the category. This is what years of schooling does to the creativity and genius of a student.

The question is why did this happen over the progression of those years. The system destroys this type of genius. Firstly, schools promote standardization to ensure every individual gets equal opportunity to grow. It has a very narrow view of intelligence and academic prowess which actually can be diverse and change from person to person. They promote accepting things the way they are when growth, progress and success depend on creativity and the power of imagination. The largest failure of the education system is standardized testing, which starts early on in the process of education.

The education system is such that it is programmed to push students to pursue higher studies even if they don't want to. If people really wanted to help the youth of our country, we should stop the myth that a college education is necessary for success.⁶ Today most people pursue higher studies because they feel they have to; not because they want to learn. Astonishingly some of the most successful people are in fact college drop outs. This somewhere indicates that formal education is not a necessity for success. The fact remains that universities have become a place where the majority of the students are there just for the degree. The education system tests how well an individual can abide by

the rules presented by the education system. When people choose to not follow rules are labeled as failures by the education system but are some of the most successful people of our time.

The list of successful and wealthy dropouts could go on and on but to provide evidence of such success, this argument would provide a few examples: Paul Allen is the billionaire co-founder of Microsoft dropped out of college and convinced Bill Gates to come with him. Richard Branson, the owner of Virgin Music, Virgin Atlantic airlines, Virgin mobiles and the Virgin group of companies is a high school drop out. Warren Buffet, who is considered as the king of investments and stock analysis dropped out of college. Today his works are a part of most of the business curriculums all over the world. The founder of popular online payment gateway Paytm, Vijay Shekar Sharma also discontinued formal education to obtain more practical information than theoretical. James Cameron, the Oscar-winning director, producer and screenwriter is a drama school dropout too. One of the most creative people of the 20th century lacked basic primary education; Walt Disney was a producer, director, screenwriter, animator, content creator, developer of Disney, winner of 26 Oscars and 7 Emmy awards.

This list could go on and on. What is different about these people from rest of the society is that they were highly creative and did not abide by the rules of the education system. They had it in them to go against the flow. Modern education does not deliver creative answers to the problem our society faces; it merely answers the obvious questions that have already been solved.

Not having a degree or dropping out of college does not make an individual creative or a genius. It is the other way around; creative people chose to not pursue formal education due to the flaws in the system. Not getting stuck in the whole system of education enables these people to nurture their creativity and their genius to grow in the right direction. Just not being part of the system does not ensure creativity; if that were the case then the state having the most illiterate people should be the most creative. This clearly is way too far from reality. Education though reduces creativity and spontaneity in individuals, but it is essential for the overall wellbeing of individuals. Education over the years harms the natural creativity of the students, but it leaves them at a better overall position in the long run in terms of grasping abilities, understanding, processing information, and mental capacities.

Model of an Ideal System

The education system must be such that it caters to all the needs of the changing perception of people. Nothing is too bad to reform. Adaptability is the basic principle for survival of anything. Change is the only constant in today's society. Some fundamental changes to the system can be adopted from other countries. Children should be able to play for most of their days from sun up to sun down until the age of 5 or 6. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, children do not begin academics until they are 7 years old. They should be able to try new things constantly as they wish, and be generally loved and valued and spend their time playing, enjoying, and learning what they want to learn. Nursery rhymes and children's songs are necessary fun. Additionally, they promote literacy. Children begin hearing similar phonemes and understand the concept of rhyme, rhythm and melody. This creates pattern recognition for linguistic development and is a precursor to reading readiness. Preschool education system must contain important information being conveyed in the form of songs and rhymes. Preschool is a place for making friends and playing, including making things with materials not available at home due to space, messiness, lack of funds to purchase materials, etc. Making and creating are two endeavours which occupy the ideal educational time at this age, beginning from 3 or 4, and continuing on throughout adulthood.

Elementary Education should be designed individually for each child. As far as reading and language arts are concerned, as each child begins to become aware of the alphabet, the sounds of letters can be introduced. It has been found that the method of teaching phonics to be superior in terms of reaching and teaching every single student with a curriculum which is explicit, progressive, organized and systematic. Maths at a basic level can be individually designed and incorporated using as context making, creating, and new projects; maths also come naturally through daily life examples. Shapes and sizes can be introduced organically too. Memorizing mathematical facts are valuable throughout life. So is memorizing language we do not understand like pledge or poetry. Memorizing is helpful because it expands a child's ability to hold increasingly larger amounts of information in short and long term memory. It is a good brain exercise.

We humans are motivated and rewarded when we use our strengths. It feels like play when we do something we are good at. And that is the guiding principle behind teaching each child. Let them experience the feeling that what they are doing is fun, valuable, interesting, and worthy of their time and focus. Students must be given an unconditional acceptance which makes everyone feel safe, and ready

to greet the world with an enthusiastic and open mind. This means students must be encouraged to think outside the box and make mistakes while doing so. Mistakes should not be punished at this stage of education. Teachers must find material which interests the student. Keep finding more new material and interests, and allow interests to run deep as well as wide. The system must never stop learning what it is that delights a student. Teachers must focus on asking open-ended questions as much as possible. Continue on throughout life in this manner. Expose everyone to as much as possible in the world. Experience is invaluable, and as much hands on learning as possible will create an interested student yearning to learn more and constantly improving her or his capabilities.

As far as higher education is concerned there is a need to trim the bureaucracy & overly expansive curriculum. In other words, eliminate the matter in the curriculum that is just memorization but not the matter students really need. This will allow teachers more flexibility in the curriculum. This will also provide a systematic approach that allows teachers to selectively go deep, and allows others a higher standard for higher performing students. The education system must focus on creating a training, motivation, coaching, and mentoring for teachers. This can largely be done digitally via email and YouTube-style videos as well as through a more traditional online learning management system. The training system must include the best practices in education research and deliver the learning in a way which is consistent with the models students are learning. Each university should have a social network for sharing, comparing, and rating teacher-created curriculum materials and content.

Let the teachers pick their own textbooks, not the university but the teacher. Most modern textbooks are designed in a way so as to teach the students content from an examination perspective. The textbooks give more importance is given to preparing students for the exam than for life. This method of teaching from various reference books, decentralizes the process of conducting examinations and removes stress off the shoulders of students.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude that the education system is aimed at giving students the opportunity to grow and mature over the years. The root cause for all problems due to the system is its rigidity and mechanical nature. This results in many highly talented, creative people to undervalue themselves due to the shortcomings of the system. The basic principle behind the construction of the system is flawed. I observed that the rigidity of the system does not let creativity thrive. Technical subjects are given more importance over the creative ones. There is very less scope for students to be creative sticking to the rigid curriculum. Innovative thinking is very limited in students owing to the constricted syllabus in educational institutions. The sole reason some students attend college is to obtain a degree.

Also, I would like to recommend that children under 10 years should not be given any kind of tests. This would ensure that the mental growth and creativity of children is not hampered due to being told to avoid mistakes. The stress on students at such a tender age would also be reduced considerably resulting in more productivity. Not getting stuck in the whole system of education enables children to nurture their creativity and their genius to grow in the right direction. Young students must be imparted values and knowledge without burdening them with examinations.

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