

Modern education a boon or a bane

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



Has the education made me a better person? Or made more of a robot out of me? This is a primary question that everyone should be asking themselves at the beginning, end and even amidst the process of receiving the education. Is the education system in India really all that it is made out to be? Now I know that this topic has been beaten to death especially since the last two years what with Aamir Khan on an education reform movement and Kapil Sibal asininely tinkering with the education system and every bit and piece making headlines now a day. But what the hell... this is my blog and I will be damned if I don't get to ramble on it. Although, globally, Indian students are considered amongst the best brains. The higher education facilities in India are amongst the best that there are. But somewhere in our education system, we kill the spirit of the students. We kill the initiative taking powers of the students. If we look at our educational system, we go by a set rule. The classes are deemed to take place for certain hours of the day during which, there would be a division in the form of time tables. The teachers or professors as the case may be, will come, read something from some material, give a pop quiz or a theoretical assignment and then leave. And then the next professor will come. And then the next day will dawn and so on. Then there would be examinations twice or thrice a term. And as is typical of most of the students no one, barring a few outliers, will study beforehand. Hence, all the cramming will be done on the day before the exam with feverish passion, roaming the corridors of hostels or sitting in home sipping tea/coffee and burning the proverbial midnight oil, students trying to cram everything till the second before question paperis placed before them. Did you just not smile reminiscing aboutsimilar moments of

your life? Then there need be no more proof that this is a typical experience in the life of a student. But has anyone ever stopped and questioned if this is actually a right thing to do? Is it really necessary to have papers twice a term? What if the paper does not merit twice or thrice examining the student? Will the system be changed? What if a course titled Advanced Oral Communication requires that the best way to judge a student would be to check how well he can communicate orally? Would the ancient ones be awoken from their gargantuan slumber to stroke the embers of the goblet of fire or would this be yet another example of requests falling on deaf ears? Or would the PGP office say, yet again in a deep oratory mellifluousness, “ Keh diya na... Baskeh Diya”? And what about the content of dribble that we dare call as our curriculum? We teach students how to write e-mails in corporate communications class but we are not able to teach them to keep their cell phones silent during lectures. We are teaching them transportation problems and assignment problems, but we are still not managing to impart the importance of being punctual in attending lectures or submitting assignments in due time. Oh sure we get to know what balance sheet is (though we can never balance the two sides), some professional and serious sounding business jargon to carry us through most of the conversations, some bits and pieces of knowledge that we hope would be useful once we get to the jobs. When I was in school, I was a very shy and introverted person (that’s not to say that I am not now... just that I have upgraded myself over the years and learnt how to be more open and enjoyable with friends around). But I was not always like that. I remember bits and pieces and my ma tells me that I used to be a spirited child in my primary years and that I

used to be extremely full of energy, extroverted and highly energetic. So what changed me over the years? I will say the educational system in my school where the primary school teachers were not comfortable with children questioning their authority, receiving apt witty remarks from a 3-4 year old kid and the problem of having to miss their afternoon nap in the class because of one hyper-active kid who would not lie down even after being fed a whole bottle of valium. Ok that I am kidding and that I was never fed valium. But yea that was true that my teachers were frustrated with me because I would not let them rest. Peter Senge (1990) maintains that we learn only when the experience is followed by immediate feedback. Hence, the feedback of knitted brows and frown on the face, instead of crow's feet, were enough of a feedback for me to deter me from doing such things over the years and be made more of an obedient student. Then came engineering college... and boy what a bliss it was. Of course the first year ragging and adjustment issues apart. But that was truly the first stage of the education that I really enjoyed. Probably because our branch was a relatively smaller one so the entire group of students were pretty close knit (of course we now have some outliers but where do we don't have them?) Even though most of the education was more of a rote of a fixed curriculum set by ancient professors and studied through copies of textbooks and notes prepared by some diligent students (Thanks neetu, priyanka, lohani and all hostellers for question papers). But more importantly, at that stage I truly realized the fun of being with friends, how one learns more from friends than from profs, how several long lasting friendships can be wrought out of simple things such as having birthdays on same or nearby dates. During the management

education, I believed that I learnt a lot. And not just about balance sheet, or 5 S (Seiri, Seiton, Seiso, Seiketsu, Shitsuke), or how about Pavlov's experiment with dog and its saliva, or even about financial markets, difference between debt and equity, complex macroeconomic models or any such thing. The most important learning came in the peoplehandling skills, as a management education should impart; even though there was no formal education in it and the entire curricula was to be learnt through a practical experience and the only test for the same would be in real life scenarios. For instance, knowing the name of the peon of the PGP office is not going to get you any 50 basis point reduction in the cost of debt (Talk about being arbit!) but it would certainly help you get an advance copy of the next term time table and allow you to plan your leaves accordingly. Or asking a mess worker about this life in general is not going to drastically improve the quality of food but at least you will get the best that there could be from amongst them. And that's the kind of thing that an education is supposed to teach, practical things. And not something that we can just learn and forget. An education is not supposed to make you like a robot, ready to do work at the command of a master or numerical spout the value of pi at the behest of a command. Education should make you realize the significance of pi as well. But in our haste to provide this hardcore knowledge to the students, we often miss out on the softer aspects. Ironically, most of the B-schools conduct GD and PI in their selection process just to see the soft skills of the candidate and forget to hone those skills in candidate once they enter the hallowed portals of the prestigious institutions. In that context, lesser known institutions still have

crowd which has better soft skills to make up for the non-presence of the brand names.