

## **IN NEED OF A LEARNING REVOLUTION**

The following essay is in the form of a dialogue between a conventional teacher and Socrates. See how Socrates provides for an alternative form of education debunking all the myths of the contemporary educational model.

Teacher: What do you mean by being educated?

Socrates: Education is the ability to critically think over issues pertinent to human life. It cannot be equated to schooling which is nowadays derecognizing individuality of students and curbing creativity.

T: But the students are learning today. Aren't they? Look at the scientific advancements around you!

S: Learning is an eternal process culminating in enlightenment of individual. With increase in the magnitude of crime, violence and terror, I believe that not all people are being educated. The extent of scientific advancement does not necessarily imply human advancement. The current system of education alienates the student from the learning process through enforcing discipline, compliance, obedience and testing at all levels.

T: Don't you think that evaluation of students through examination is the most appropriate mode to understand if a student is educated or not?

S: Indeed not. The dominant culture of education has reduced to testing an individual and not gaining knowledge. Examination should act as a support system and not as a tool for robbing away the pleasures of childhood and youth. The psychological, parental, social and peer pressure faced by students during school years across the globe has led to more and more students committing suicide in a bid to end their misery after failing in their pursuit of

professional excellence. Any such rigorous structure of evaluation which leads to fatal consequences is bound to be abolished.

T: So how do you see the future of education?

S: The future lies in the hands of the actors willing to change the present structure of institutionalization. Let us take an example of a girl child named Sita and see how she should be educated in my future educational model.

T: How do you assess the capabilities of Sita at an early age?

S: There is no need to gauge the talent inherent in an individual, at least in the early years of childhood. It will blossom by itself. During early years, Sita should acquire skills to socialize, care for others and appreciate uniqueness of every other student through actively participating in the kindergarten school. Attending this kindergarten school would be mandatory for all students.

T: You mean no admission as well as evaluation tests for Sita as she enters kindergarten?

S: Yes, greater emphasis should be laid on interactive learning through outdoor tasks and fun based learning activities. The basic qualities of human life such as eating properly, helping others, self-reflection, social awareness and inter personal communication should be induced in Sita during her tender years. Throughout these years a single teacher should teach Sita so as to reduce the apprehensions and inhibitions in the bond between Sita and teacher.

T: When should Sita begin with her formal schooling?

S: Formal schooling would begin only at the age of seven.

T: Shouldn't Sita stress more on science, mathematics and other core subjects in her formal schooling?

S: Indeed not. The de-prioritization of subjects is the key to keep the flame of curiosity burning in the mind of a student. Music, dance, arts and humanities should all be kept at par with other core subjects such as mathematics and science. School should cater to the interests of Sita rather than those of the administration. Therefore, individualization is the key to success of the school.

T: How do you intend to realize the interest areas of Sita in her years of formal schooling?

S: It would be the duty of the earlier kindergarten teacher to narrow down in a report as to what fields Sita seems to be attracted to. On the basis of this report along with due observance during the formal schooling period, Sita would be provided with learning opportunities in her fields of interest.

T: What will Sita do after she completes this alternative form of education?

S: I believe this form of education is not an alternative but should be the mainstream education. It will be completed when she will reach the age of 15. After a successful completion of this comprehensive education, she can either apply for vocational training or prepare for University studies by studying for two years.

T: Is this model cost effective? Will the school be able to bear so much cost for Sita?

S: This model is effective for public schools. Sita will be funded throughout the formal education years. Thereafter, for applying to higher education, she will be provided fund according to her performance in a nationwide joint entrance model exam which will require logical and critical reasoning instead of rote memorization.

T: How can we increase the in-class learning experience of the students?

S: Video-based learning is one of the most efficient ways to position a concept in the mind of a student. Using social networking media is also one of the effective ways to help students with the academic curriculum. Creating online groups for every class on social networking portal,

such as Facebook, My Space etc. with the class teacher acting as a moderator would be an innovative way to generate discussion and debate.

T: How will we evaluate a student in this novel model?

S: Introducing weekly tests and experiential learning along with practical training should be the basis for evaluation. The performance of the student in the real-world is the way forward in this educational model. Any form of structured term-end or main examination along with daily homework is to be done away with. This is because such exercises merely increase the mental pressure on students and indirectly hampers the learning process.

T: How do you intend to reform the teaching profession in this system of education?

S: Teaching is a noble profession and teachers should be treasured by the public as well as by the government. Raising the minimum standards of qualification to a master's degree, reputable salaries and unionizing of the teacher community should be the measures to reform the teaching profession. Teachers should be conferred the discretion to use innovative methods of teaching within the classroom. Moreover, they should not be forced to comply with any guideline. Basic changes like calling out the teachers by their name instead of addressing them with a title can significantly strengthen the student-teacher relationship.

T: Any tips for the school administration?

S: It is pretentious to believe that the legislators and education boards are always aware of what is best for the student community. The school should be free to design the school syllabus and curriculum. Any student who is unable to cope up with the curriculum should be provided support from other students along with adequate counselling by the school administration. The teacher should not be evaluated every year by the management as this leads to excessive pressure on the teacher to outperform other teachers or seek any other personal interest. The

relationship between teachers, legislators, education board, school administrators and students should be based on trust.

T: How would you incentivize the students to attend the school?

S: By providing free meals and books, students would readily attend school. Moreover, the model of not marking a student with a rank would attract students to attend the school.

After listening to this talk on the future of education, the teacher was left dumbstruck and Socrates left smiling.