

## EDUCATING THE EDUCATORS

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### INTRODUCTION

The word educate is derived from the Latin *educare*“ which means lead out”<sup>1</sup>. Thus educators must lead or draw out information from the students. They have, instead, been pumping information into students since thousands of years.

This pumping of information has not helped. It makes only the teacher active in the classroom. The students are passive listeners.

In education, the main stress is on marks that a student gets in an examination. In recent times there has been a trend to provide high scores, and it is not surprising to see students get ninety five percent marks with ease.

This is possible only when textbooks are converted into much smaller test series. A three hundred page textbook is often converted into a five or ten pages test series with answers. An atmosphere is created where students are inspired to learn by rote the contents of the test series.

The test series many increase to 60 pages for an engineer examination. The teachers know this, the parents know this, and the students know this. The stress on examination results means there is no desire to understand the contents of the textbook. A test series can be cracked 15 days before an examination.

This is what students do till class X. Things become a little tougher later, but the stress is still on learning by rote. There is some summative and formative evaluation in the normal classroom, but that is not of much consequence. The schools assess liberally because the higher the percentage of a school the higher are the prospects of admissions of students.

There is nothing wrong in all of the above. Examinations are important; so are results. However, their entire span is less than a month. The remaining

eleven months in a year can be concentrated on true learning.

The purpose of education should not be decided by some educationist sitting in his office and writing about making students good citizens. It must also tally with the real needs of what people need in life. They need enough money to fulfill their basic expenses and still have money to spare for future needs. They must acquire health to enjoy their wealth. They must eat and sleep well and their relationships must be productive and happy.

Students want jobs once they finish their education. Governments and the corporate world can provide very few jobs. In a country like India, nearly eighty percent Indians are farmers, carpenters, masons, painters, vegetable vendors, grocery store owners, and those who work in factories on daily wages.

Schools and colleges have nothing much to offer them in terms of education which can help them in their work. Most of them work for long hours and earn very little money. They also cannot manage to work beyond a certain age, since the work involves intensive labour.

India is now shifting towards skill development. This is a step in the right direction. However, acquiring skills may not be enough. They simply do not earn enough money. Skills can generate wealth if students have are provided with an environment where they learn to become creative and intelligent while they acquire skills.

Creativity involves the use of imagination or original ideas in order to create something.<sup>2</sup> Intelligence is the ability to gain and apply knowledge and skills.<sup>3</sup>

These definitions are vital, because educators rarely include them in making students learn in creative and intelligent ways. The two words do not exist in their inherent psyche. In fact they do not exist in any

polytechnic or any other institution which provides skill development.

In fact, the meanings of these words are rarely fully grasped even by the best brains in the world. They would have created abundance if they did. Until twenty years ago, the educationists and the psychologists believed that intelligence could not be increased. They said it was genetic. Human beings were either born with it in abundance or they had to manage with whatever they had. They gave no hope those born dull or mediocre. It was a reflection on God, who differentiated randomly. By one estimation, twenty per cent of students are learning disabled. What kind of God gives no hope to twenty per cent of children? The fact is that we, as educators, have created a method which leads to boredom and exasperation. Children are curious. They bubble with a desire to learn new things. We give them textbooks to learn by rote. Formation there is some light at the end of a tunnel. It is a very faint one. But it is a light.

The light has already started a new revolution. It is now slowly accepted that intelligence can be developed and increased. What is more important is that education can foster it well.

This is a great acceptance of what the sages had been saying in India for hundreds of years. The pity is that the concept of developing intelligence has not been introduced in the classroom by teachers.

There are two main reasons for this. One is the obsession with knowledge and the second is the imparting of knowledge by teachers to students. The two are considered sacred in the world of education, when in reality; the reasons behind this conclusion should be revisited in a creative and intelligent manner.

Knowledge cannot be power, as Hobbes would want us to believe<sup>3</sup>. Knowledge is information and skill gained through experience or education.<sup>4</sup> This information or skill can be good or bad, useful or useless. The good and the useful is decided by objectives of a student. It cannot be thrust by an adult, as most parents and teachers do today. They limit their choice to four or five careers. The problem is these careers form just one per cent of all jobs. Parents and teachers either give up on these students or force them to fend for themselves once they fail to achieve them.

It is true that education cannot cater to the objectives of every student. However, teachers can change the way knowledge is acquired by the students. They should be able to choose information and then give it meaning as per their minds. This makes students think creatively and it makes them responsible for their own destinies. This generates creative energy early in life. A creative and intelligent mind cannot ever lose.

More importantly, it considerably improves learning. Modern trends tell us that teachers must facilitate in the process of learning instead of passing inert information to students.

Facilitation in the process of learning requires a change in thinking. The shift should be to create an atmosphere where the student becomes an active learner from a passive listener.

There is ample research to show that purposeful reading, speaking, thinking, listening and writing can considerably improve learning skills.

Reading makes students familiar first with the alphabet, then with the word and finally with the meaning of the word in the sentence. One word can have many meanings. We can only know how it has been used from the sentence or context in which it is used. Carlyle warned us not to be slaves of words. Aldous Huxley believed words can make us rise above the brutes. They can also sink us to the levels of demons.

Speaking improves communication and elocution skills. It improves presentation skills and stage daring if students are asked to present their ideas in the class.

Thinking converts knowledge into intelligence. It can also make students creative if they speak in an atmosphere of true excellence.

Listening improves concentration if it is part of peer learning and peer pressure. It generates new ideas and builds confidence.

Writing is vital for very obvious reasons. It improves written communication if students write in creative ways, instead of writing mechanically while copying some work from guides or while preparing a project by cutting and pasting from the internet.

Writing requires hand, eye and mind coordination. It requires stamina of the hand. Good and precise writing can add substantial marks in an examination,

because it pleases an examiner to see a neatly written answer sheet.

According to Swami Vivekananda education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man<sup>7</sup>. This means

- Human beings are born perfect.
- This perfection is not automatically available to them.
- It is the job of education to draw out this perfection so that it reflects in the behaviour, character and success of the student.

This is obviously not happening. There is too much poverty, disease, hatred and inefficiency to even think of it as a possibility. Swami Vivekananda tells us “Education has yet to be in the world, and civilisation-civilisation has begun nowhere in the world.”<sup>8</sup>

Civilization is an advanced stage of social development. It is the symphony of democracy, which has intelligent discontent and leisure.

Education has repeatedly ignored the profound thinking of great educationists. Every teacher reads it. Every teacher quotes it. But no teacher uses it. Socrates wanted discussion. Teachers pump information into students. George Bernard Shaw wanted to see the child in pursuit of knowledge, and not knowledge in present of child. Yet, we see books chasing bewildered students. Bertrand Russell wanted education to foster intelligence because it is the main thing needed to make men happy. Teachers force students to learn by rote and then regurgitate the contents on an answer sheet.

Most teachers and parents want education to inculcate values. The problem is the vague understanding of the word “values”. “Values are standards of behavior”<sup>9</sup>, whereas “value is the importance or usefulness of something”<sup>10</sup>. Values are the motivating power of man’s action and are vital for his survival.

Values control man’s subconscious mechanism. For this he must know his objectives as per his own reality and mind and he must find the energy to achieve them.

Values cannot be taught. A teacher or educator can only inculcate his or her own values on every child. This is playing with the subconscious mind and the

child, telling him that he cannot choose his own objectives and must blindly follow what elders tell him. Poverty and most other forms of misery come when students are prevented from thinking creatively. Education must address this and create an atmosphere where students can think and act creatively at every step of his learning.

This can be created with the utmost of ease. Creative Educators, a registered NGO has invented a revolutionary technique which fulfills all the parameters stated so far.<sup>11</sup>

It takes the following actions in a classroom to achieve what has been stated above<sup>12</sup>:

- It divides a classroom into groups of six, where the best and worst student exists in each group.
- It distributes pages to each group. Thus in class IX or X, ten groups in a class of sixty can be given a chapter each, so that the entire class gets 10 chapters.
- All students within the group read the entire chapter allotted to it and prepare notes.
- The students ask the teacher to explain the portions not understood by them.
- Students discuss among themselves and resolve difficulties. They once again ask the teacher to explain what has not to be resolved within the group.
- Students come forward in groups, to present to other groups, the portion allotted to them.
- After the presentation, other groups are asked to scan the chapter presented to them and ask questions. Students within the group answer the questions.
- Other groups come forward and repeat the activity.

In case of mathematics the procedure used is as follows<sup>13</sup>:

- The teacher explains a concept or exercise on the board as usual.
- He asks the students, who have understood the concept, to raise their hands. Usually

ten to fifteen per cent understand at this stage.

- These students explain the concept to other students within the group. The percentage of students who are able to understand the concept substantially at this stage.
- The teacher gives exercises to the entire class to establish the usefulness of the technique.

The above technique is relevant for all subjects taught in the classroom from class IV to the postgraduate level.<sup>14</sup> It has all the elements of creative learning. The students read, speak, think, listen and write.

Students write creatively when they prepare notes while reading. Students learn to communicate while discussing, while presenting their portion to the rest of the class, and while asking queries from the teacher. Communication skills are very important for the corporate world. There is general lament about the poor quality and communication skills that students, even from very good colleges, have.

The students also learn analyzing skills while asking and answering questions. This is an even more cherished quality in the corporate world than communication skills.

We all know about discussions. However, discussions do not serve much purpose because they can be chaotic or directionless. They generate enormous energy when every individual within the group has a common and great aim, a common and great purpose, and a common and great destination.

Napoleon Hill called this the master mind club. He said this was the surest way to become rich.<sup>15</sup> Creative Educators has demonstrated this concept of group dynamics on millions of students throughout India. There was a quantum jump in the examination results of the students, and in their concentration and positive attitude. They even have a revolutionary personality development programme based on their revolutionary technique.

Skill development is an improvement on school education. Schools provide generalized knowledge where as human beings need specialized knowledge. However, even in skill development, the need to think creatively and wisely cannot be undermined. The difference between a cook and a chef, and a tailor and a fashion designer can be an addition of two or more

zeros in his income. These zeroes are not added for skill, because a cook gives as much quality as does a chef. It is added because chefs and fashion designers apply their minds creatively to constantly find better materials, methods and machines. This upgrades the quality and products and reduces the wastage involved in production. It also makes the world a better place.

We need fashion farmers, masons, electricians, painters, plumbers, teachers, politicians, doctors, lawyers, and so on.

The revolutionary teaching technique of Creative Educators can be introduced to in the technical institutes of engineering and polytechnics for subjects taught in the classroom. The students carry the innovation of new learning into the workshop. They start thinking creatively at a very early age.

The dissatisfaction with education despite increase in literacy rate is because of the way teachers transmit information to children. They are bubbling with energy. The information provided by teachers is 30 years old. Information doubles on the internet every few days. Students are aware of this information. They do not want an outdated two hundred page book is forced down their throats. They cannot react to the painful ordeal; so they shut down their minds in a sense and intellectual boredom and fatigue caused by listening to things they cannot relate to.

Improving literacy rates is not a bad thing. It brings more children to school. However, it cannot be a measure of excellence of the human mind. That can only come from creative thinking. The technique of Creative Educators improves concentration. There is peer pressure of losing to other groups. There is also the goodness and peer learning where students are in complete harmony with learning at their own levels of thinking. It is a comfort zone which creates true excellence. Two things happen in peer learning. Students understand the language of the same group better than from a teacher. Adults speak a language alien to them. Students also explain till all the students have understood what is being learnt because they want to defeat other groups and do not want to lose to them. There is a healthy kind of competition.

Constructivism has become central to education in the world in the last few years. It shifts its attention from classroom lectures to creative learning in students. The theory has its roots in the dialogues and

questions of Socrates with his followers. The idea was to improve the quality of thinking.

Jean Piaget<sup>16</sup> and John Dewey<sup>17</sup> developed theories for progressive education. This led to the evolution of constructivism.

Piaget created his philosophy in 1920. It has not been introduced on a large scale in the classroom, despite a lapse of nearly one hundred years. The reason for this is Piaget's dependence upon objects for classroom learning. Education is centered round text books. Objects are rarely if ever available in schools. More importantly they divert from the central purpose of education, which is central to giving examinations based on text books.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training accepted constructivism for education in India. It created a document, National Curriculum Framework, 2005<sup>18</sup> based on constructivism. It wanted children to construct their own knowledge, create understanding and become creative in what they read. It believed that this would result in special talents and skills and create joy of education.

The revolutionary technique of Creative Educators had been invented much earlier. It was first demonstrated in schools as early as 1990. The technique is now been implemented by the State of Maharashtra in India, and will soon spread throughout the country. The technique has gained momentum because it removes the weaknesses of other techniques and creates a technique which is rarely if ever criticized.

The technique was assessed for improvement in results. A three day revision of a class ten course fifteen days before their final examination showed 24% improvement results compared to the previous year. Some school showed 100% results. This prompted from Maharashtra government to implement it in the state.

The technique improves admissions and attendance. It generates immense of learning. Written feedbacks from students and teachers show unanimous acceptance of the technique.

I urge you to explore the possibilities of implementing this technique in your country. It could change the history of your country and of the world.

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