

Indian Education: Where is our Steve Jobs?

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The world is remembering Steve Jobs as an icon on par with the likes of Edison and Einstein. Despite Jobs being a dropout, the culture of innovation in the system has brought his innovation thus far. As the world showers praises at Jobs, which is justified no doubt, my mind also diverts to another question.. My mind shifts to another question of where exactly is India's Steve Jobs? Can our system produce such an innovator? I find it hard to find an answer and I find the issue deep rooted in the system that we have

My view of this is the nature of our entire education system is uni-dimensional (in line with Lord Macaulay's perceived observations) and it in a lot of ways inhibits our attempts at being out of the box creative thinkers. The erstwhile English education system, that we rigorously have adopted, is a system that is made ideally for the bureaucrats and not the creative thinker. It is tailor made for people who report to a certain higher authority but not someone who can create a world for oneself. This underlying nature of the system is reflected in our day to day education system of today's society.

In today's education system of India the main issue, leaving corruption aside, is that the nature of it is very memory oriented. It is stuffed up with text, text and more text without any context to it. When we study history, we don't understand the context behind it, we just mug it up for the sake of clearing the exam in the 7th or 8th standard. When we are studying our famed science subjects, especially in our State Boards, the process is to memorize our way to glory in the run up to the board exams in 10th and 12th. You get verbatim questions in the exams from the textbooks which makes a mockery out of the intelligence of the creative Indian. While memory is indeed a value addition in competing in the competitive global environment, too much of it blocks the creative urge within our system. We end up nodding our heads to whatever that is preached in the texts irrespective of questioning why and what is it all about. On the other hand, the American system instills the ability to explore the unknown at a very early stage. The instilling of this ability to question at an early age sets them apart especially when they start their Core courses. In addition to this, they have this ability to mix the aesthetics with the core courses to be more balanced unlike our system.

Our system is so rigid that it pushes us into one narrow path of education with no way back once one is inside it. One doesn't have the leeway to actually move away from what one is ordained to by the system. On the contrary, the American model offers you flexibility in courses at the academic level. You can pick up a course in Painting while doing a major in Mechanical Engineering. This ability to

compliment the engineering or core science with aesthetics is an asset whose importance was exemplified by people like Steve Jobs. In our system, we are neither provided the opportunity to understand the other facets nor are we provided the opportunity to integrate these two aspects to form a holistic approach to education as a whole. This reduces our diversity and ensures we don't have an understanding of the multiple disciplines which is crucial to be a visionary in today's world. While I talk about this, the counter argument is the presence of the world class IIT's. I agree they are world class but whether they are innovation driven is a different question.

The IIT's are indeed world class, the students produced are indeed world class and the professors have a stature that is very well reputed. While I have high regard for them, I also find it amusing to know why none of them are world beaters at the innovative game. Note the word "innovation". Innovation is inventing something not having a multimillion dollar service company (which is more of discovering others innovation); there is a difference between creating a Windows platform (that changed the world) and running an outsourcing IT company. Innovation is producing a new concept and revolutionizing it in the magnitude of Bill Gates or a Steve Jobs. By and large most of the IITian's are in prominent positions under some big boss (there are exceptions ofcourse) but don't necessarily produce Nobel Prize winning innovations or even path breaking innovations that create impact. This might happen in the future but still the count in comparison with America is less. Despite the quality of the IIT's, we find it hard because fundamentally the system is something that is catered towards memorizing and accepting what is fed, not questioning and challenging the norms of what knowledge is fed. I do know students who actually attempt that despite the system's inadequacy but even if they do so, the system pulls them down without providing support to them.

Education should be about acquiring skills and application of skills. The focus should be on the *skills set and not the knowledge jargon* since the former is the key to adapt to various scenarios. Education across the world doesn't perfectly give this but the American model seems to provide this better (atleast from the output of innovators). The Indian model or the erstwhile British model (the Indian model's source) has its own set of advantages in terms of enhancing our mental storage potential but it is too rigid for today's world. In today's world of innovation, the confluence of academic areas and the brashness to think out of the box is the need of the hour and the key to innovation

While we might have our Abdul Kalam's and JRD Tata's, for the potential of our massive nation, we have the capability to produce numerous Steve Job's, just that our system as a whole needs to be redefined to focus on the area of exploration and not the path of

nodding our heads to the factual science that is being preached
Till then, Where is our Steve Jobs, would still remain a question for
all of us

**Bottom Line: Education should focus on skills set, not chunks of
information it should be not memory based but more innovation
based**

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