

Children must be taught how to think, not what to think

Outline:

1) Introduction

Thesis stat: Cognitive development is imperative for a prosperous society. Sadly, our outdated pedagogical approaches and blinkered milieu have had a profound impact on circumscribing the cognitive abilities of children, preventing them from reaching their intellectual potential. However, with meticulous reforms and robust policies, this problem can be eradicated.

2) Significance of cognitive development in children.

3) Factors that have hindered the cognitive development in children.

a) Rote learning

b) Outdated pedagogical approaches employed by schools.

c) Antediluvian curriculum

d) Narrow-minded environment

e) Children are forced to adhere to societal conformity.

4) Impacts on individuals and society.

a) No cognitive development in children.

b) Lack of interest in education.

c) Little to none technological development in society.

d) Local students cannot compete with foreign counterparts on global platforms.

e) Living standards of a society start to regress.

5) How to circumvent the issues

a) Latest pedagogical methods should be introduced.

b) Update the curriculum.

c) Educational institutions should offer an eclectic mix of courses.

d) Hire trained teachers.

e) Examinations should be based on critical evaluation.

6) Conclusion

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education (Martin Luther King jr). The mentioned statement put forward by one of the greatest proponents of 'civil rights movement' appositely elucidates the primary objective ~~###~~ of education: to hone the cognitive and intellectual ability of children. There are myriad factors that have stymied the cognitive abilities of youth, to name a few: Rote learning, archaic pedagogical approaches, blinkered milieu, societal norms, etc. Cognitive development is imperative to a prosperous society. Sadly, our outdated pedagogical approaches and blinkered milieu has had a profound impact in circumscribing the cognitive abilities of children, preventing them from reaching their potential. However, with meticulous reforms and robust policies, this problem can be eradicated.

The significance of cognitive development of children cannot be overstated. The youth of a country is a vital asset that has to shoulder the responsibility to propel the country towards prosperity and growth. If the youth is bereft of

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cognitive or intellectual growth, the future of a country can be bleak. If the younger generation is not equipped with the requisite skills, it can have dire repercussions for the country. Hence, investing in a quality educational curriculum that is specially designed to harness the cognitive development of children is akin to investing in the country's future.

One of the critical, if not the most crucial, factors that have hindered the cognitive development of children is the over-dependence on rote learning. Rote learning refers to the verbatim memorisation of educational content and reproducing it in a similar fashion without actually having actually understood the in-depth concept of the content. Making matters worse, these practices largely go unnoticed or are deliberately ignored, perpetuating the issue. According to Graduate-programs.org, Although rote learning could be useful in memorisation, using this approach too often can lead to students having a lack of critically thinking skills. This reflects the dire repercussions of rote learning on cognitive ability of children and the urgent need to address the issue. Maxim.....

Another potential factor that has ensued in the underdevelopment of children's cognitive abilities is the outdated pedagogical approaches. This problem is particularly ubiquitous in the global south, where educational institutions employ outdated and inefficient teaching methods that have remained unchanged since their inception. Such institutions are bereft of the funds and intention to upgrade labs, if there are any in the first place, seating arrangements, training of teachers, etc. Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) that one of the critical challenges the country's educational ecosystem faces is the scarce number of technical and vocational training institutes, with many lacking infrastructure, teachers and tools for teaching. The stats revealed by IPRI are alarming and underscore the severity of the issue.

The antediluvian curriculum is another blight in the already emaciated educational system. The educational system, particularly in Pakistan, has failed to keep pace with the evolving advancements in the field of science and technology. In order to fully harness the intellectual capacity and cognitive abilities of children, it is essential

to teach them about the latest developments occurring around the globe, as also corroborated by Khadim Hussain, Dawn, 2014, who observes that a meticulously designed curriculum is crucial to enhance cognitive, physical and psychological abilities in students. These shortcomings in the currently followed curriculum need to be addressed, as this is indispensable for any improvement to occur.

The environment in which a child grows can influence them to a great extent. A diverse and receptive society can impact positively towards the cognitive development of children. On the contrary, a blinkered milieu that is hostile towards ~~or~~ opposing beliefs can go a long way in circumscribing the cognitive development of young individuals. When there are no diverging opinions in a society, the youth are exposed to a limited narrative or ideas that can encumber their thinking process. According to International Journal of Research, a child's social environment influences their cognitive development and educational attainment. The mentioned study sheds light on the profound impact that a society or community can have on the mental growth of children.

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Another determinant that can be attributed to the partial cognitive development of children is compelling them to abide by societal conformity. Children should be allowed to explore the world in order to satiate their curious desires. It is when ~~the~~ gratuitous restrictions are imposed ~~on~~ upon them that they start to blinker their thought process, which eventually inhibits their intellectual and critical development. (Kishwar Enam, Dawn News, 2020) articulates that imparting discomfort to children is shown to negatively affect behavioural, psycho social, emotional and cognitive development. This indicates the urgent need to discard any practices that could bring unnecessary disconcert a child.

The factors mentioned above can leave ~~div~~ deep recessions, not only for individuals but for entire societies. It can impact from several dimensions, one of which is the underdeveloped cognitive abilities of the younger generation. This, in turn, can open the door to a plethora of challenges. As aforementioned, the younger generation is an invaluable asset to a country that can either set the country on the course of prosperity or, if not well-equipped,

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can usher the downward spiral. Reinforcing this thought, Shuja Nawaz (Dawn News, 2023) regarding Pakistan, which is considered to be one of the lowest investors in its people, states that for Pakistan to prosper, it must invest in its younger generation, and failure in doing so have deprived the country of the chance to become an upper-middle income country. In this way, an ill-equipped, uneducated youth can only add to the woes of a nation.

Another impact is the erosion of any interest in academia amongst the youth. An outdated pedagogical approach coupled with heavy reliance on rote learning all but guarantees a diminished liking in education. For the students that study in such an environment, education becomes a tedious task that they must endure to enhance their employment prospects. This apathetic development is what deters many brilliant minds from pursuing careers in research and academia, resulting in a dearth of scientists in the country. This is evident from the fact that Pakistan, a country marred with archaic educational system, has only been able to, since

its inception, produce a single globally renowned scientist, i.e., Dr Aze Khan, and he, too, pursued most of his education abroad. Failure to nourish any acknowledged scientists in recent times reflects the ~~years~~ years of cumulative challenges that have befallen the plagued educational system of the country.

Another devastating impact that can be attributed to the underdevelopment of cognitive and analytical development of youth is the scant technological developments in society. With the prevailing disinterest in academia and failure to nourish brilliant minds, subpar scientific innovations, if there are any at all, should come as no surprise. Students bereft of opportunities to hone their intellectual capacity can only contribute little to society. Addressing this issue in the context of Pakistan, (Alina Khan, Dawn News, 2023) states that Pakistan is one of the most technologically underdeveloped countries in the region, owing to decades of heedlessness of the government towards the cognitive development of youth. This reinforces the notion that unequipped adolescents can only add to the plight of already teetering communities.

Lack of adequate cognitive and analytical abilities can inhibit the capacity of local graduates to compete with foreign counterparts for employment prospects. Subpar education systems, albeit, produce graduates who possess valid degrees but fail to equip them with the requisite analytical abilities that are sought by global markets. Consequently, these graduates struggle to compete with their ~~contemporaries~~ foreign contemporaries in multinational companies and industries. Local graduates seldom receive job offers from companies situated in global north. Qader Tanoli (2016), states that most of Pakistanis seek employment opportunities in developed countries like USA and UK. The scarce employment prospects in the developed world reflects failure of our education to endow ~~the~~ the requisite skills to our students for them to secure ~~their~~ spots in leading companies around the globe.

Another possible could be the regression of the living standards of a society with other determinants deteriorating, such as low employment prospects, sub-standard innovations, and a dearth of professional academics in the country, the living standards of a community can only

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go askew. There is a strong correlation between well-equipped youth and the prosperity of a nation. History is replete with examples that substantiate these claims. The experience of Singapore, in particular, serves as a powerful example, wherein the country initially struggled with many challenges. ~~But~~ Still, with meticulous reforms and a specific focus on grooming adolescents, it has now set itself on the course of prosperity. Therefore, by stimulating such reforms, low-income countries facing myriad problems, such as Pakistan, can position themselves as thriving hubs of excellence.

As aforementioned, cognitively impaired youth can have dire impacts, not only on individual lives but also on societal context. As daunting as these might seem, undertaking robust measures that target this issue on the grassroots level can bear fruit. One way to attenuate this challenge is to introduce the latest pedagogical approaches. There remains no ambivalence that the archaic means of teaching are not as effective as they used to be. With the introduction of laptops and devices of such ilk, education can be delivered in a more receptive manner.

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Incorporating such resources can go a long way in spurring interest in education. According to (Dawn News, 2011), integrating ICT in a classroom can add immense value to the quality of teaching, making it a holistic learning experience for pupils. Introducing such new techniques can assist in offsetting some of the negatives induced by the antiquated knowledge means.

Introducing the latest pedagogical methods and incorporating ICT addresses only one aspect of the problem. Outdated curriculum is another challenge that requires undivided attention. New teaching methods can only go so far when the teaching content is quite old. An up-to-date syllabus is imperative to well-equipped students. Students need to be made cognisant of the latest technological and geo-political developments occurring around the world. They should be taught how to address and circumvent issues that arise in the contemporary world. (Zeeshaan Khan, Education System in Doldrums, 2021), states that outdated syllabi coupled with education policy based on reliance can result in poor language and arithmetic skills. Poor development in such major skills can have devastating ramifications, potentially affecting professional careers.

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Another factor that could prove beneficial in surmounting the challenges at hand is to offer a wide variety of courses to students. Educational institutions, especially in the developing world, erroneously place far too much emphasis on science and medical-based subjects, resulting in many institutions restricting the offered courses to these two fields. For a healthy and well-rounded educational ecosystem, it is essential for institutions to offer an eclectic mix of courses. Buttressing the notion, Professor Oni Fagbohunghbe, a professor of psychology, states that imposing career paths on children stifles their career paths and, hence, precludes them from reaching their intellectual potential. Professor Oni's findings underscore the dire repercussions of limited majors offered and the urgent need to address this obstacle.

Employing qualified and well-trained teachers can go a long way in elevating the critical and cognitive abilities of children. Most of the teachers, particularly in developing countries, are either not qualified enough or lack the ability to articulate the knowledge and concepts effectively. Imparting the knowledge is equally important as having it in the first place. Sadly, educational institutions place much emphasis on

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the teacher's qualification, ignoring their ability to pass on that knowledge. Consequently, when their doubts are not addressed, the students rely on the traditional method of memorization without understanding, which hinders their intellectual growth. GOV.UK (2014), states that teachers in the United Kingdom must be trained and awarded QTS status before they can teach in any state-funded schools-UK, being one of the best education providers in the world, highlights the importance of trained teachers. This shows that trained teachers are imperative to improving education standards and, hence, the cognitive and analytical prowess of children.

As aforementioned, rote learning is one of the most critical factors that hinders the intellectual capacity of children. Hence, it is essential that educational institutions find a way to circumvent this issue. One method that could be employed to triumph over this challenge is to revise and revamp the examination system such that rote learning is rendered futile. The current examinations are comprised of questions that entail no critical analysis and solely rely on rote learning and producing verbatim answers, which are enough to help one secure decent marks.

However, if examinations demanded more critical analysis, the overreliance on rote learning could be offset. In light of these underscored faults in the current examination system, it is ~~the~~ paramount significance that educational institutions revise and revamp their structures in order ameliorate the ramifications.

In a nutshell, it is quite evident that the proper cognitive and intellectual development of children is crucial for prosperous individual careers and societal progress. As pointed out in the essay, there are a myriad of factors that hinder the mental development of children. As daunting as it might seem, these challenges, with meticulous reforms and robust policies can be surmounted. The solutions embodied in this essay contain out-of-the-box solutions that could prove to be very beneficial in this regard. Triumphant over these challenges is a long and arduous journey that entails continuous planning and persistent policies. Nonetheless, inspiration should be drawn from the experience and example of Prophet Muhammad ^ﷺ, who, in the initial days of Islam, had only a handful of educated Muslims. Yet, through persistent

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hard work and unwavering resolve to increase literacy amongst Muslims, he laid down a strong foundation for the education system, empowering the Ummah to produce some of the world's most brilliant and capable minds for centuries to come.

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