Innovative Sustainable Education for the Future

(Original)

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According to Aristotle's education theory, the purpose of the state is to educate civilians in order to secure the happiness of man and this ought to be guided by legislation whilst following the gradual development of the civilian's bodily and mental faculties. Suffice to say, it would therefore be naïve to adopt a one size fits all approach to education. There does not seem to be one right system. For example, Asian cultures such as the Japanese place greater emphasis on instruction regarding behavior in society and harmony between individuals whilst in Europe the system focuses more on acquiring the necessary knowledge and reasoning skills to be able to perform in the workplace environment. Both these approaches are of equal merit, but in my opinion, one key ingredient worth consideration is that of harnessing failure as an essential element for ultimate success.

Within the European context, learners are increasingly prone to psychological dysfunction due to the adverse discouragement of failure. This is due to the fact that poor academic performance is often attached to a form of punishment, as also commonly practiced in several African countries. In oriental settings however, the minimisation of exposure to underperformance encourages a resistance to reaching optimal potential capacity, as no clear distinction is made regarding good or bad grades. As Henry Ford puts it "Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently". Therefore one cannot separate the co-existence of success and failure when prioritizing the overall objective of global prosperity.

Unquestionably, many prestigious worldly figures who have contributed significantly to addressing complex worldly challenges such as eradication of poverty, improvement of health, promotion of gender equality and environmental sustainability, have a documented story of failure. Albert Einstein himself, is known to have been a poor performer in school. Other names include Nelson Mandela, Marie Curie, Steve Jobs, Michel Jordan, Oprah Winfrey and Thomas Edison to name a few, that all faced some form of discouragement such as bankruptcy or

rejection. Consequently, it is my proposition that as part of the academic curriculum, a mandatory alternative course in innovation or 'out of the box thinking' be integrated in parallel with all current standard subject areas. Students would then be deservedly awarded according to their attempts of investigation and exploration.

The innovator would have the freedom to test different approaches whether artistic, scientific or otherwise, towards solving a particular real life problem of their choice that they can focus on yearly. They would also be required to research relevant people within their particular field of interest to draw inspiration from. High emphasis would need to be placed on crossing existing limitations to capture the obscene as was the case with inventors from the past. The outcomes of these projects could then materialize in either a physical or virtual format with the aid of advances in technology. The most appropriate age range that I believe this course would be suitable for is between upper primary and high school level, as the learner is at a stage of development where he or she has the ability to make reasonable decisions for themselves that will help shape their future.

It is high time that in order to achieve a sustainable method of instilling knowledge for the betterment of people, that we teach the concept of failing forward in a safe environment with minimal adverse effects. We cannot deny that when mistakes happen, learning occurs, more so with the proper guidance in place. Even in our day to day lives, products and services often need to be re-launched so that they can continue to satisfy customers to the best of their abilities. Indeed great innovation like great people, is birthed from a continuous process of trial and error.