Better Education, Better future

Stem cells, genetically modified babies, electric cars and even space holidays are no longer what we see in sci-fi movies. The world is changing at a breakneck speed and education is our only window to harness our wings, to fly high into the world of creativity and abundance of opportunities. I envision an education system that teaches us how to think, to understand and therefore to form our own opinions, to inculcate us to become independent learners and leaders of the global community. This would definitely result in many positive changes to our understanding of the world and erect the foundation for a stronger sense of purpose in life.

With the widespread of technology, we have so much information in a mouse’s click away. Disappointingly, a large majority of students would not have the initiative to perform external readings as we are still boxed by the exam syllabus and rigid marking schemes. With the gargantuan amount of past papers worked out in preparation for the examinations, students could virtually predict the required answer to score a much-anticipated “A” without even understanding the content, which totally deceives the purpose of education. Thus, as idealistic as it sounds, we should move further away from the exam-oriented system in order to develop well-rounded individuals. Academics credentials should not weigh so much in determining whether a candidate is to be admitted into a university, like the current status quo. Education should no longer be about how much we can cram into our brains but rather, how we apply the theories, formulas and concepts learned. In my opinion, exams are the old-fashioned way to test the students’ ability.

Without the exam-based system, gadgets such as laptops and tablets, mediums that students know and love, which encourage interactive e-learning, can be incorporated in schools, supported by coursework-based assignments to monitor that we have learnt so far. With that, students will get to explore the boundary-less sea of knowledge at their own will. For example, to log on to free resources sites like Khan Academy to gain more in-depth knowledge and give us a better apprehension on our field of interest.
Whilst we can’t deny the fact that the Internet provides us with a wide array of stimulating and informative educational resources, at the downside, we must admit that using a laptop in learning has proven to be a huge distraction to many. The temptations to slip off into social network sites and gaming portals have proven to be too strong for us to resist. Every time before pressing the evil “On” button of my notebook, I would solemnly tell myself the tasks that need to be achieved, but as much as I want to deny, most of the times nothing goes according to my plans anymore when I log on to my email and notice the gazillion emails from Facebook, urging me to log on to the site. Once again, procrastination prevails and there goes my 3 hours with eyes glued to the screen but nothing productive has been achieved.

Even in classrooms, it’s extremely difficult for the teachers to control the students on what they are actually browsing. Teens sure have amazingly quick reflexes, and noticing the teacher’s glance, we will immediately press the Alt-Tab key, pretending to be working intensively on our homework. Therefore, if independent learning were to be practiced extensively in schools, the laptop should be specially programmed to prevent so much precious time wasted on pointless roams around social media sites. Although teenagers should held responsibilities on their own time management, at certain times, the internet is so addictive that our muscles no longer obey to our brains’ commands to buck up, leaving us with a pang of guilt after time squandered. And that’s when external programs come in real handy.

Another aspect that I would like to point out is the mindset of students that need to be altered in the world today. In Asia, it’s quite uncommon to find an over-achiever who does not want to become a doctor, engineer or lawyer as these jobs are often regarded as exceptionally prestigious due to the competitive nature of gaining admission into these courses in universities throughout the world. However, the problem is that these students do not really grasp what the professionals are doing at a day-to-day basis. In my opinion, this is indirectly due to the fact that that our education does not expose us to what each occupation
signifies. Despite having a wide plethora of career talks, counseling sessions and education fairs available, most of them are extremely vague and biased towards the course that the organizers are marketing for. Therefore, I hope that our education system can include programs that will set our eyes wide open to what truly awaits us in each industry. For example, internships to provide the students with the opportunity to have hands on experience and really try out life working in different fields for short period of times should be assimilated into the secondary education. With that, it would be much easier for us as students to determine where our passion and interests lie in order to make a thoughtful and rational decision, preventing us from being enslaved by a job that we despise, waking up unwillingly with mouthful of moans and groans before setting off to work every day. Instead, we need these programs as catalysts for self-discovery so that we can find out in born talent and abroad a journey that we enjoy.

In essence, many aspects such as these are imperative in transforming the education system to keep up to date with this ever-evolving world. I muse upon Nelson Mandela’s word of wisdom which says “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”. It can all start with a paradigm shift in the education, but it can surely benefit us and to nurture us to become part of the next generation that helps shape the world. After all, it’s the human capital that will ultimately help leapfrog Asia to the next frontier.