HAS the modern education system led to an increasing dependence on coaching institutes? It seems to be so.

Modern parents are putting their children into coaching classes or tuitions at a very early age. Right from the time of primary schooling these kids start going to tuitions for English, Mathematics and so on. Even in ‘single income’ families nobody sits with these kids. Of course, a housewife has a right to rest and entertainment but the kids are over-burdened by these extra hours of study and are robbed of their rest and entertainment.

Why do we need these coaching institutes? Population, employment, age restrictions etc. are major reasons that force children to become a part of the rat race. There are a few hidden reasons as well. Our children need to get more than 90%. But, they get more than 90% and still don’t get admissions and jobs. The result is depression, stress and suicide. We saw all this in the recently released movie 3 Idiots.

To win in this rat race kids try to maximize their output. The child becomes a factory. A job or admission becomes dependent on various inputs like time, money, food (energy), comforts (rest, entertainment) etc.

Students cut down on play-hours, T.V.-hours etc to increase time input. Some high aspirants miss regular classes (including all other activities like laboratory work etc.) to attend these coaching classes. Some students go to two or three different tuitions at different places – mostly to some teacher’s home, while some attend 1-2 coaching classes. These are mostly small, dingy, congested buildings. Teachers may be teaching a wealth here but the atmosphere and facilities required are certainly comparatively better at most of our schools. Why then can’t our schools provide that extra edge, leaving students at the mercy of coaching institutes?

Food and entertainment come with money but rest and comfort don’t. This tight schedule means that the child is not sleeping for hours. This is detrimental to the child’s health. Marks go down. That means more or better tutors. What are we trying to achieve?

Tagore and many others have believed that nothing should be forced upon a child. He or she should grow naturally. The reason behind less number of successful researchers, scientists and Nobel prize winners in India is because things are imposed on us. Free-will can give us more success. Sounds like individualism but that’s true.

Human beings, of all living beings, produce the weakest of offsprings, which need to be constantly taken care of for a long time. Some things come naturally. Some are taught or learnt from the environment. We do need to push our children. But this pushing game has crossed its limits now. Ask these students if jobs or admissions were not that tough and scarce, how many of them would go to tuitions, eat junk food, pop pills and miss on real life, that is, informal learning.

Life is ambiguous. But we have a very crisp selection system for jobs and admission. Does the concept make your divisions look valid? For instance, 59.9% is second division and 60% is first division! Then, 75% is distinction and 74.9% is not. Profession and education are a part of day-to-day life. We have made a ghost of them.

Education is becoming very formal. It has become pen, paper, book, and guide, help book, sample papers and add computers, CDs, Internet to this list.

Besides, every student always lives in a state of dilemma. “Am I making a right choice?” It’s a TSP – travelling sales person’s problem. Is she/he choosing the right school, college, coaching institute or even job?

Students have a very mobile life. Adding mobiles, Internet, e-learning software, portals and social networking to that – you have a loaded pistol ready to fire. Do we have enough targets? We say that opportunities are plenty if the students are ready to be self-dependent. Which course can teach you that? It is a very stressing job after all.

Success is ultimately an individual’s own concept, her/his own definition, one’s own WISH! Many people say it’s finding a job or getting married and having kids. To some, it means joy. To some it means money. So, let a child grow naturally so that she/he is able to actualize her/his self-concept.

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"Life is education. Education is not life."