

DRUCKER'S
PRESCRIPTION
FOR
REBOOTING
KOTA'S
EDUCATION

“Mom/Dad-I can't do it, so I suicide/I am a loser/I am the worst. Sorry, Mom/Dad/ This is the last option I have”¹

“Sorry Papa, I couldn't do this year as well”²

“I don't want to study so i am running, ask mom not to worry”³

These are the contents of a few letters out of many, these aren't isolated cries, they're a chorus echoing “We don't need no Education”, a chilling indictment of a broken system. These letters sit heavy on the hostel authorities desk, the harsh glinting off the crumbled paper, another plea cut short, another life teetering on the edge. This wasn't the first, they knew this wouldn't be the last. Police & hostel authorities sighed, the weight of the Kota city's despair setting on their shoulders. There are cases to report, a frantic family to console, and a system to wrestle with. The scribbled cries above reveal more than just suicides, they expose a city buckling under the pressure it perpetuates. The relentless pursuit of rank, the suffocating expectations - has seeped into the very fabric of Kota, threatening to crush young minds. The very education that is provided to give a better life, is pushing students to such a desperate edge that they see no escape but to end their lives?

Kota

Nestled in the state of Rajasthan, India, lies Kota, a city synonymous with high-pressure academics. It pulsates with the energy of young minds striving for academic excellence. This is also referred to as the “Coaching capital of India” which attracts students from across the nation, all aiming to crack the toughest entrance exams. It boasts renowned institutions like Allen, Resonance, and Bansal classes, renowned for their rigorous methodologies fostering an environment of learning and growth⁴. They boast cutting edge teaching methods, meticulously structured courses, granting students a superior edge in the fiercely competitive world of entrance exams. The allure of these coaching institutes draws students and parents alike. Each year, a wave of ambitious students washes over Kota, transforming it into their temporary home for one or two years. The students leave their families & friends & dedicate themselves to intense preparatory classes for the highly competitive JEE, NEET & UPSC. Kota's

¹ “18 year old JEE aspirant dies by Suicide in Kota, Second this year”, India Today, 29/01/2024

² “20 year old NEET aspirant dies by suicide in Kota, second suicide case in 48 hours”

³ “I don't want to study further, Kota student leaves”, Times Now News, May 9, 2024

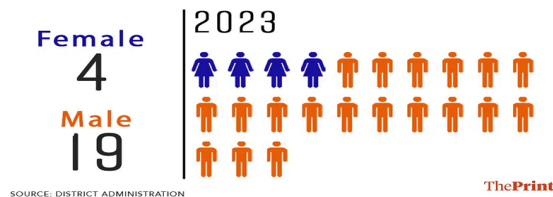
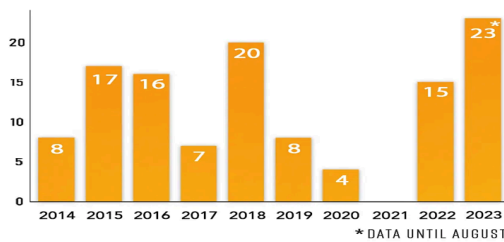
⁴ “Why Kota is preferred for JEE, NEET Coaching despite spate of suicide deaths” India Today, September 9, 2023

coaching industry thrives, and boasts a valuation of over £1.2 billion. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself has lauded it as India’s “Kashi (Holy city) of education”.⁵

My Escape from the City

I remember my own brush with Kota’s relentless pursuit of ranks. Arriving with my mom here a year back, the assault on my senses was immediate. Auto-rickshaw drivers morphed into dream peddlers, hawking, “**Guaranteed IIT Seats**” and “**Best Hostels**” in a cacophony of promises. Towering neon signs screamed, each a frantic and desperate bid for attention.

STUDENT SUICIDES IN KOTA
(2014-2023)



Unlike most of the students, I somehow saw through the facade. Fortunately, a flicker of self-awareness saved me. I walked away from the relentless pursuit of rank and scores, choosing a Law firm long term internship instead.

A City built of broken Dreams

But many aren;t so lucky or brave enough to confront their parents with their desires. The statistics on the left paint a grim picture, representing

more than just statistics. They’re a chilling reminder of the humans of Kota’s system.

The numbers⁶ raise serious concerns, they only represent the most extreme consequences. The vast majority of children struggling under the weight of expectation never resort to such a tragic end. However, this doesn’t diminish the very real problem hidden beneath the surface. Countless students silently battle immense stress, worry, and anxiety due to the relentless pressure to score. Just like the not visible part of an iceberg dwarfs the visible tip, the silent suffering of children under pressure far outweighs the reported statistics on suicide.

The industry thrives, a multi million giant built on student anxieties and dreams. Students , lured by the promise of coveted seats, become cogs in a relentless machine. Their days are meticulously planned - a

⁵ “This is the most stressed City in India” The Guardian, October 9, 2023

⁶ “Police, politicians, parents, Psychiatrists, everyone at work to stop the next Kota Suicide”, The Print

suffocating cycle of classes, mock tests, and endless revision. Sleep becomes a luxury, passion a forgotten companion.

Has education become a pressure cooker for rankings, sacrificing the mental health and creativity of our future generation.? The answer, sadly, seems clear.

THE REBELLION BEGINS: “WE DON’T NEED NO EDUCATION” ‘Pink Floyd.

These crumbled pieces of those letters above & many unspoken words are a desperate battle cry. They echo the sentiment of Pink Floyd’s anthem, “*We don’t need no Education... Teachers leave them kids alone... All in all it’s just another brick in the wall*” a twisted reflection of a system that prioritizes rote learning and rankings over holistic and mental development. It’s a rebellion against a system that crushes dreams instead of giving them flight. Kota’s Education system’s obsession with churning out perfect scores fuels a quiet defiance - a generation choosing to break free from the mold, their implied rebellion whispered through the lyrics of this song.

Even the unflappable **Peter Drucker**, a man who thrived on optimizing systems, wouldn’t have been entirely appalled by the undercurrent of dissent in Kota. The **INTENSE PRESSURE COOKER** atmosphere would have baffled his vision of optimized systems.

Peter Drucker mentioned that profits signifies the validity of business. These institutes might be misinterpreting soaring profits as proof of being successful. High student rankings, booming admission numbers in these institutes are leading them to believe they are on the right track. Drucker advised against these high profits margins, he stipulated “*High profits margins do not equal maximum profits*”. The rising number of suicides and anxiety, one that Drucker, with this focus on purpose over profit, would find deeply concerning.⁷

⁷ Peter Drucker, “*The Five Deadly Business Sins*”, The Wall Street Journal (2022)

Peter Drucker too, famously declared, “*A business exists because the consumer is willing to pay you his money. You run a business to satisfy the consumer*”. If judged by this principle, Kota’s coaching institutes are failing their core customers - *the Students*. Students and their families invest heavily, seeking a prestigious university seat, yet the Kota’s Education disregards and violates their fundamental needs in the following ways:

1. Crushing Pressure

There’s little room for breaks, hobbies, or even a phone call home. This constant pressure to perform breeds a suffocating anxiety. The fear of falling behind in this competitive rat race becomes a constant companion, leading to sleepless nights and crippling self-doubt.

2. Loss on individuality

The structured system in Kota treats students as a homogenous mass, a factory churning out only future doctors and engineers. Imagine a budding artist forced to spend years buried in science textbooks, their artistic spark slowly fading under the pressure to conform.

3. Irrelevant Education

The system prioritizes memorizing facts and formulas in this AI driven world, over fostering a love for learning and intellectual curiosity. Students cram for exams, regurgitating information with little understanding of its real-world application. This leaves them ill-equipped for the challenges of the future job market.

4. Broken Dreams

Imagine years of relentless effort culminating in a single exam that determines your future. This immense pressure can be emotionally debilitating, leaving students questioning their self-worth and struggling to see options beyond these narrow entrance exams. The “broken dreams” of Kota are a stark reminder of the human cost associated with a system focused solely on rankings and competition.

A Druckerian Prescription for Kota's Future.

As the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral wisely stated, *"Many things can wait, Children cannot. Today their bones are being formed, their blood is being made, their senses are being developed. To them we cannot say tomorrow. Their name is today"* This compelling reminder stresses the urgency of change. We cannot afford to wait, the future of Education in Kota demands a paradigm shift.

Peter Drucker, a lifelong advocate for effective learning, might have seen a seed of change in this rebellion. Here's how a "Druckerized" Kota might transform, guided by his timeless principles.

From Rankings to Results: A Performance Beyond the Scorecard

"The best way to predict the future is to create it," declared Peter Drucker. In Kota's education system, this signifies moving beyond the sole metric of rankings and scores and adapting a more 360 degree approach that prepares students for the future. Kota institutes can find valuable guidance in the Drucker principles of Management by Objectives (MBO)⁸, by focusing on the well-being of the students.

Imagine assessments that, as Drucker advocated, "measure what matters," not just mere subject knowledge, but also crucial aspects like, critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills so important for thriving in today's modern world. Personalized learning plans, echoing Drucker's belief in *"building on strengths,"* would replace the rigid one-size-fits-all approach.

Instead of racing for the top ranks, Kota's coaching institutes can help them discover & teach the power of contribution. As Drucker remarked, *"you will achieve the greatest results in business and career if you drop the word 'achievement' from your vocabulary. Replace it with 'contribution.'"*⁹

This shift in focus from rankings to "where students can contribute" can give these coaching institutes a fresh perspective towards life in general.

⁸ Drucker, Peter. *The Practice of Management*, New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1954

⁹ *"Drucker Law, Ten laws of the Modern World"*, Forbes, By Rich Karlgaard, April 19,2005

Systems Approach

In the high-pressure world of Kota coaching institutes where success is often measured by soaring rankings and student enrollment numbers. Peter Drucker, in his book, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices*, emphasized a "systems approach" where every element contributes to the whole. *"The whole of a system is not necessarily improved if one particular function or part is improved or made more efficient. In fact, the system may well be damaged thereby, or even destroyed as we improve a part. In some cases the best way to strengthen the system may be to weaken a part — to make it less precise or less efficient. For what matters in any system is the performance of the whole; this is the result of growth and of dynamic balance, adjustment, and integration rather than of mere technical efficiency."* He would argue that simply optimizing individual parts within a system can be dangerous, if it throws the entire system off balance. Drucker's principle could have suggested that relentlessly chasing rankings might come at a cost. The continuous focus of these coaching institutes should not be on short-term gains; those could potentially damage the overall system, neglecting the "well-being of students", who are at the center in Kota's educational ecosystem.

Coaching Factories Evolve: Rise of Passionpreneurs

Drucker stated, *"The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't being said."* These Coaching factories in Kota could morph into mentorship hubs, addressing and understanding the unspoken needs for students for comprehensive guidance. Experienced professionals, not just exam-focused teachers, would become mentors, fulfilling Drucker's vision of "management by objectives," where student's mental & physical well-being and future success become central goals.

Career counseling, a missing puzzle in the Kota's system, would be of prime importance. Individuals shouldn't be confined to the limited paths of medicine or engineering. As Drucker advised, *"The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well the product or service fits him and sells itself,"* here, the "customer" is the student. Their aspirations should be matched with their respective aptitudes, which can open doors to a flood of diverse career opportunities. Furthermore, the curriculum should

take into account their skill-based development of individuals. The introduction of Stress-management techniques, physical activity programs, and creative outlets can be woven into the daily fabric of Kota life, which nurtures their well-being alongside academic excellence.

Knowledge as a Tool, Not a Burden: Learning by Doing

Drucker stated, "*There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all.*" The curriculum should shift towards project-based learning. Students shouldn't just absorb facts; they should solve real-world problems, applying knowledge in a practical context, as Drucker advocated, "*Success in the knowledge economy comes to those who know themselves — their strengths, their values, and how they both perform..*" Interdisciplinary studies would break down the silos between subjects, thereby creating an understanding of the world. Entrepreneurship and innovation should be celebrated, encouraging students to become creators, not just test-takers. This shouldn't be about passive learning; it should be about active engagement, about transforming students into knowledge architects, building their own intellectual structures.

Parental Partnership: Guiding Lights, Not Dictators

The constant apologies to parents in the suicide letters are a stark reminder of the immense pressure students face due to their parents. This fear of disappointing their families, the ones they hold as the "paramount dot" in their lives, becomes a crushing weight. Maya Angelou when asked, "what advice she would give to her daughter about growing up in society", she answered "*...I would say you might encounter many defeats but you must never be defeated.. ever. In fact, it might even be necessary to confront defeat all the way through .. I would teach her to laugh a lot, a lot, at the silliest things,,, and be very very serious ... I would teach her to love life. I'd bet you that..*"¹⁰. Her advice and wisdom can offer a guiding light for parents in Kota. The merciless pursuit of parents for their children to achieve those unrealistic aims, the ones which are too far stretched, as Drucker would have warned "*is not being ambitious, its is being foolish*"¹¹ Parents, who are this source of immense pressure, can choose to be guiding partners in

¹⁰ "Maya Angelou advice to her daughter curated by Female Poets Society" Youtube.com

¹¹ Drucker, Peter F. "Managing Oneself", Harvard Business Review

their children's education. They shouldn't be seen as dictators dictating their children's futures; they should be seen as supportive guides, understanding their child's strengths and aspirations while providing valuable guidance & leadership, as Drucker observed, "*The leader of the future will be the one who can bring the two together – economic results and human well-being.*" Open communication channels should be established, creating a safe space for students to express their anxieties and explore options beyond the narrow confines of entrance exams.

After all, Peter Drucker, wouldn't view Kota students as "**commodities**", unlike John Maynard Keynes. he would believe in unlocking the true potential within these students.¹² This is precisely what's needed to sail through these murky waters of Kota. By prioritizing the well-being and potential of each student, Kota's coaching system can evolve into a "more humane and empowering environment".

Drucker's ultimate advice for parents & mentors is that everyone should be instrumental in giving these individuals "personal satisfaction, and to help them to feel they contribute, perform and serve their values and fulfill themselves. This "Druckerized" Kota shouldn't be a utopian ideal, but a step towards a future where education fuels passion, not crushes dreams. **In this Kota, students shouldn't just become exam-toppers; they should become future leaders, equipped with the skills and vision to take on the world's challenges and create a brighter tomorrow.**

Peter Drucker's advice to students in Kota would be to brace themselves for the inevitable ups and downs of life. Conversely, facing challenges and setbacks early on in life is one of the best things, as it teaches resilience and coping skills. So, don't be quick to give up on yourself. If you ever feel the urge to write a suicide letter, stop right there. **Instead, use the same paper to make a paper plane and set it to fly higher, like your dreams. And with each paper plane you launch, let it symbolize hope, resilience, and the freedom to soar beyond the clouds of adversity.** Remember,

"Success is not final, & failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."

¹² Forbes, "*The Founder of 21st century Management: Peter Drucker*", Steve Denning, March 1, 2013