

Revamp Education, for Start-Up India

As the government prepares to launch its Start-Up India, Stand Up India campaign, one area that requires special attention is education. The biggest service the government can do to make India a hub of innovation and enterprise is to make sure that young people who come out of school and college not just know what they are expected to know but also develop their creative and critical faculties. For creating new businesses and business models, entailing disruption of established tradition, it is not enough to be a brilliant scholar or a team player.

Stay hungry, stay foolish — this was Steve Jobs' advice to young graduates of Stanford in a commencement speech that has become a classic. Of course, he did not mean to either commend



anorexia or valorise irresponsible indolence. What he sought was to discourage low-level equilibria, to reject facile acceptance of convention. In effect, he was asking young people to hark to a primordial urge of the human species to do new things, to go where others have not gone, to try new ways of doing familiar

things, to experiment, to learn, to discover, to invent, to achieve, not only for the utility of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow but for the beauty of the rainbow and of the chase. Thanks to a tradition of iniquitous social hierarchy and an education system founded in and for colonial rule, Indian children have been trained to conform and accept authority, rather than to question, deconstruct and create anew. This is hurdle in the path of innovation and entrepreneurship.

The task of changing the culture of education is gigantic, even tougher than improving its efficacy. It calls for money, vision and commitment, on the part of teachers, administrators, parents and society at large. In other words, it calls for exceptional leadership. We wait.