

# Qualitative Reforms in Indian Tertiary Education System

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## Abstract

At one end, we are grappling with quantity i.e. enrollment but on the other hand the most serious concern is quality and relevance of higher education imparted to student. In terms of quality, the biggest lacuna in the system of higher education is mismatch between the need of society and what the students are taught in classrooms. Our universities and colleges produce a number of unskilled manpower every year that is not fit for corporate sector. It is due to lack of proper governance and commitment to work. So, there is need to paradigm shift to education. There is no dearth of intellectuals/professionals in India who may come with shining stars only if policy makers have patience and concern. Keeping the new education policy educate, encourage and enlighten in view, we must go ahead.

**Keywords:** India, Tertiary education, Qualitative reform

## Introduction

It is true that Indian education system is lagging behind both qualitatively as well as quantitatively in ratio of population and educational progress of developed countries. On the other hand it has achieved substantial growth after independence but we may compete with China and Japan, which are examples for us. On one hand, we are grappling with quantity but on the other hand the most serious concern is quality and relevance of higher education imparted to student. In terms of quality, the biggest lacuna in the system of higher education is mismatch between the need of society and what the students are taught in classrooms. Our universities and colleges produce a number of unemployed youth every year that is not fit for corporate sector. It is due to lack of proper governance and commitment to work. So, there is need to paradigm shift in education. There is no dearth of intellectuals/professionals in India who may come with shining stars only if policy makers have patience and concern. Keeping the new education policy educate, encourage and enlighten in view, we must go ahead.

The Indian education system still suffers from colonial legacy. With the privatization of education, the institutions turned into factories manufacturing degrees. Enrolments also become/fruitless activity when students target to obtain certificates and degrees for the sake of being called educated as against qualified. The concept of equity becomes irrelevant when institutions confer degree only. In place of providing jobs, making a complete man or creating opportunities for growth. In terms of quantity, there has been substantial growth in Indian higher education in the post independence context from 30 universities and 590 colleges in 1947-48, the number has gone up to around 600 universities and 27000 colleges. Despite such a quantitative expansion, we still fall short of universities and colleges as only 10% of 17 to 23 years age group are enrolled in higher education system which is far below the world average of 23%. These poor enrolments are further marked with percentage of those students who have degrees and certificates but are not employable. The enrolments are more in field of humanities and social science. As regards, number of Institutions of higher learning, Japan has 4000 universities for its 127 million people and USA has 3650 universities for its 301 million people. While in India, we have 547 universities for 1.2 billion people. Knowledge commission 2006 wanted the enrollment in higher education to increase 15% by 2015 for which, it has recommended to establish 1500 universities before 2015, but it has not been converted into reality. On one hand, we are grappling with quantity, On the other hand the most serious concern is quality and relevance of higher education imparted to students poses a serious concern.

## Qualitative Reforms

The concept of quality has been hired from industry and management houses. Educational institutions are adopting corporate patterns of organizations viz. strategic planning, accountability, raw materials (entering students), products (pass out graduates), stress free education; soft skills entrepreneurship and edupreneurship etc. Following affective areas of educational institutions have been touched for enhancing quality education.

### 1. 80-20 Rule

In corporate sector, when managers come across quality problems they decide which one is to tackle first. Pareto analysis proposes that most of the activity (80%) is caused by 20% of the factors. Rest 80% quality problems will automatically be solved.

Likewise, our educationist and policy maker should focus on 20% academic factors. Some of them are as follows-

- Teaching without learning is prevalent in most of the institutions because of shy of rotating the courses.
- Most of the decision is influenced by personal politics, politics of seniors and juniors and unequal

- distribution of work etc.
- Due to lack of interest of teachers to contribute new knowledge, students are not motivated to peep outside the class rooms.

## 2. IIP UK for Quality Education

Investors in people (IIP) approach of United Kingdom are a national policy for a purpose of encouraging organizations to value their staff for improving their standards. Likewise, our policy makers should plan a policy to invite volunteers/ NGO's as investors for upgrading the standard of our teachers, students and staff. Thereby, India may focus more and more on manpower to meet to global standards in this knowledge economic.

## 3. Academic Reforms

The biggest lacuna in the system of higher education is mismatch between the need of society/corporate sector in terms of skill that the students need to have and what they are taught in class room. Eminent academician, psychologist and, management gurus, policy makers, policy implementers, educators and philosophers should make a survey, conduct dialogues with leaders in all walks of life and find out their requirements.

The curriculum and syllabus should be renovated only after such an exercise. The other need is to introduce skill and vocational courses and closing down the departments that serve no useful purpose.

## 4. Evaluation Reforms

There is also need to change from current system of evaluation which tests only the students' rote learning capabilities to methods of evaluation that also test students soft skills and analytical abilities. CBCS (Choice Based Credit System) should uniformly be implemented in every unierstiy/college/institutions. Degree should be awarded in grade points from 0 to 9. Course content should be categorized into core courses and open courses. Core courses are compulsory subject which are a essential for students of bachelor/ masters programmes. Open courses are those optional subjects which students opt of their choice to acquire knowledge and skills. The course contents should be arranged in credits during a period of four semester 60% of total assigned credit should be from core courses and rest 40% from open courses.

## 5. Administrative Reforms

We cannot produce world class leaders till improve institutional administration, that follows-

### 5.1 Governance

The major problem of Indian higher education is crises of governance. Favouritism, corruption, caste and communal consideration are slow poison of our educational system.

Our central universities are under direct control of UGC and HRD ministry, while state universities are under control of state governments. Private/self finance institutions are headed by educational mafias. In such scenario, good governance is rarely feasible. So, there is need to lay down clear cut policies for governance and implementing thereafter.

### 5.2 Policy Formulation

There is no uniform policy of pay scales and condition of teachers or admission, exam & research procedure of various institutions in India. This affects on morale of teachers, staff and students.

### 5.3 Finance

We have universities and government colleges funded by government grants, private added colleges dependent partly on government grants, partly on trust funds and partly on students' fees.

The government has also tested self finance institutions which failed to produce quality education. So need is that government should take education sector in his hand and to fund higher education by taxing as present government imposed 3% education cess on all taxes.

## 6. Production of Skilled Graduates

There is heavy complaint on the part of employer that our graduates are not fit for the job even after recurrent training. Why is it so? **Firstly**, there is need to change 'Chalta Hai' attitude. We have students whose objective is not to enhancement of knowledge but to get for job prospects and role of teachers is to complete the syllabus within set deadlines. **Secondly**, our course content is completely theoretical, while it should be skilled based. **Thirdly**, an independent regulatory mechanism is also required to ensure that quality of our institution is not compromised. **Forthly**, our universities should make agreement with corporate sector for summer/ winter training of our students. **Fifthly**, corporate gurus should frequently be invited for lectures in universities/colleges. **Sixthly**, finishing school programmes should be initiated in every institution.

We do not have scarcity of jobs. Jam Shed Daboo, CEO, Trent Hypermarket delivered a lecture in seminar on “Manning, Modern, Retailing 2011” in Mumbai on 13.09.2011. Experts believe that the current retail boom in India will produce an additional 8-10 million more jobs by end of 2011. He argued that we have demand-supply gap & lack of quality manpower.

## **7. Polarization of Higher Education**

It has been observed that, academic and infrastructural facilities are not equally distributed among colleges and Universities. The central universities and its constituent colleges have more fund, well equipped library, infrastructural facilities, laboratories, outdoor stadium rather state government and its associated or affiliated colleges. So, There is need to permit to exchange the facilities and allocate fund on need basis.

## **8. Need of Corpus Fund**

The time has come when government alone cannot bear total burden of higher education. Additional resources are to be mobilized to share the cost. Corpus fund will be in the form of an endowment fund. Revenue obtained from such fund may be used to support the government. Corpus fund may be collected from industry, charitable trust and alumni as well as government.

## **9. Establishment of Research Institutions**

The most faculty members say that their primary commitment is to teaching. Teaching is evaluated but the sine qua non is research and publication. It is worth pointing out that many professors publish little, even at the top institutions. Further, there are peaks and valleys of research productivity in the careers of most academics. Some have argued that academic institutions should discourage the proliferation of research, that there is too much of it or too little value. They claim that the great volume of research not only wastes time and resources, but conceals truly significant work. So much research is trivial that most is never even cited by other researchers. But any kind of censorship, no matter how benign, engenders risks. No one can determine in advance what the value of any research activity might eventually be. Determining the worth of much scholarship is subjective: what might be worthless to someone might be valuable to someone else. Besides, if a great volume of publication results in more bad work, it is also likely to produce more good work. Clearly, there should be ways of permitting faculty members to focus on what they do best at particular stages of their careers. At present, there is little if any room for differential academic responsibilities for the professoriate. What may be needed is an arrangement so that faculty members who are active researchers have limited teaching responsibilities and make their contributions to their employers, the university, through research and advisement at the graduate level. Is it really cost effective to have researchers involved in ground-breaking work teaching undergraduate classes?

## **10. The Scope of making Scholars**

Other faculty members who may be less focused on research and publication can contribute more by teaching a larger number of classes and involving themselves in curricular and other service activities on campus. At present, such a differentiation of responsibilities is unusual. Most professors teach the same number of courses, regardless of research productivity of graduate advisement. It would be somewhat difficult to implement a means of allocating workload. It would also be necessary to avoid “stigmatizing” faculty who focus on teaching as “second-class citizens.” But the goal is neither revolutionary nor impossible, although, given tradition and, in some cases, faculty unions, one would have to approach the question with care. Differentiating responsibilities would require good will and a sense that the mission of the university would be best served by this innovation. American higher education needs a few improvements—and it needs a clearer statement and commitment to what has called the “academic ethic.” The professoriate needs to better understand the broader mission of higher education in American society. There is need for a better sense of community on campus—not only with regard to faculty workload and institutional commitment but also in terms of campus race relations, student extra-curricular life, and other factors. At the same time, the basic nature of what most foreign observers see as the best academic system in the world should not be significantly changed. The research base in American higher education is a key strength. So, too, is the notion of access, the idea that everyone who has an interest in pursuing higher education and the ability to do so should have an opportunity. Professors remain the heart of the academic enterprise. We believe that the tenure system helps protect academic freedom and helps maintain academic morale and stability. We must note again that the higher education system is both large and quite differentiated. Solutions to problems and, indeed, the diagnosis of difficulties must take into account the varying realities and missions of the diverse academic system.

## **Recommendations of NKC for improving Quality Education**

The recommendations of National Knowledge Commission report 2006 headed by Sam Pitroda for enhancing quality education are as follows:

- Higher Education institution should disseminate basic information relating to curriculum, faculty status, physical status, financial status and accreditation ratings etc. This would empower students and society.
- If we cannot introduce penalties for non performers, we may introduce rewards for performers.
- The higher education system must provide for accountability within the system and even the outside world. Institutional mechanism based on checks and balances constitute the most effective system for this purpose. We need to create such a system that enables students or their parents to choose and assess right type of universities.
- An expansion of higher education which provides students with choices and creates competition among institution. Consequently enhance accountability for increasing competition in higher education institutions in India, appropriate policies must be formulated which may ensure that there is incentive for good institutions and disincentive for sub-standard institutions.
- Evaluation of courses and teachers by students as well as peer evaluation of teachers will strengthen accountability in teaching learning system.
- Though, NAAC has been assessing Indian higher education institutions in India but it is not an independent body. So the independent regulatory authority for higher education (IRAHE) may be empowered to license a number of accreditation agencies, public and private to do the ratings. In doing so, the regulator would set standards for them.

Above all, recommendation of NKC constitutes an important beginning. The changes suggested would make a real difference.

### Last word

No doubt, there are hurdles in development of higher education in India. Policy makers and educationist must realize and improve it. The higher education has number of challenges which cannot be accomplished overnight. Higher learning is not for learning but it is major input for overall progress of country. It is high time, when India may formulate a vision and policy for development of skilled human resources with an aim to achieve required development and reduce the percentage of unemployment. Viewing potential of India's booming industry and technology (like BPO and retail sector), one may expect somehow India will tackle with these difficulties.

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