

“Student-Centric Learning” in the NAAC Revised Manual 2020: Thought Experimenting with some Probable “Best Practices”

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ABSTRACT

Based on opening up the higher education system to Private sectors in India, the competition between institutions for quality education became primary issue of discussion to attract more students to their courses. Innovation in Student centric learning is one of the basic requirements to attract interested students to the institution. In this context, the institutions of higher education in India are in need of infusion of quality and clarity on the approach of building world-class educational institutions.

The article tends to understand the concepts of quality education and the shift from teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning enlightening briefly about what led to this change. It also discusses the criterions based on which colleges/universities should develop it's student-centred learning model. The article also analysis the different approaches that can be adopted by universities of different scales to cater to all three criterions laid down by NAAC i.e. 1)Experiential Learning, 2) Participative Learning and 3) Problem Solving Methodology bringing about the holistic development in the students' and itself. The article also identifies how students' are the backbone of student-centred learning but how it begins with the teacher to make it a success.

Keywords: Higher Education Teaching, Quality Education, Colleges, Universities

1. Introduction

Higher education is the mainstay of any society. Colleges and Universities form the components of the higher education system to enhance students' learning and achieve a higher educational qualification. India's higher education is overall understood to cover teaching, research and extension. It forms as the ingestion system in the different aspects of life and thus generates human resources supply in management, design as well as teaching and learning. Higher education also provides opportunities for life- long learning, allowing people to upgrade their knowledge and skills from time to time based on the societal needs (NAAC, 2006). It is a process of knowing more and more about less and less. Very importantly, it develops the student's ability to question and seek truth and makes him/her competent to critique on contemporary issues thereby broadening the intellectual powers of the individual within a narrow specialization, and also gives him/her a wider perspective of the world around (NAAC, 2006).

India's higher education system is the third largest in the world after the United States and China respectively with rapid expansion over the last few decades. A total of 75 top Indian universities made it's first feature on QS India University Rankings 2018 with mainly the top 10 positions taken up by the IITs. Apart from the science and technology specialists some of the highest-ranked comprehensive universities also made it to the list. However if we look into the current scenario only 27.4% of Indian youth attend colleges and universities, while it is nearly 50-60% in developed countries. To improve this ratio a paradigm shift is being adopted by the colleges and universities from the traditional teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning. The article discusses the concept of quality education in

section (3) thereby the paradigm shift from the teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning in section (4). The approaches through which this shift is being adopted by HEI's in section (5) and finally the concluding thoughts in section (6).

2. Objectives

- To understand the concept of quality education and shift from teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning.
- To understand the approaches through which this approach is being adopted by the HEI's.

3. Quality Education

Quality is a much debated term specially when it comes to education. According to UNDP quality education is the one that focuses on the whole child- the social, emotional, mental, physical and cognitive development of each student regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, socio economic status, or geographical location. It prepares the child for life not just for testing. Moreover quality education should provide student's with resources and policies that helps them to continue education in a safe and sound environment. According to UNICEF quality education must include:

- Learners who are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities;
- Environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities;
- Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the areas of literacy, numeracy and skills for life, and knowledge in such areas as gender, health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS prevention and peace;
- Processes through which trained teachers use child-centred teaching approaches in well-managed classrooms and schools and skilful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities;
- Outcomes that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

In India GER(Gross Enrolment Ratio) is considered as a measure to understand the percentage of students enrolled for higher education. But instead of that if EER (Eligibility Enrolment Ratio) is taken as a measure then it would provide a better approach to understand the how 'quality' education can be improved thus making the student enrolment in higher education at par with the developed countries. This would be in the highest good for not only the country but also the modern education system. The modern education system as mentioned earlier has made a shift from the traditional teacher-centred learning to student-centred learning. Therefore we discuss this shift in details in the following section of the article.

4. Paradigm Shift from Teacher-Centred Learning To Student-Centred Learning

Higher education helps in overall development of a country through economic development, social progress and political democracy in India. Higher education also helps increase wages and productivity that directly enrich individuals and society (Singh,2017). Higher education is also identified as a parameter to measure the quality of human resources of a country. As per the available reports, two third of the Indian universities were providing sub-standard education while 90% colleges in India were considered below average. Students / Teachers were running after attaining or providing degrees and there was no concern for gaining knowledge and wisdom thereby making most of the institutions a factory of degrees only. Attendance had dropped drastically in most of the institutions and class room teaching has become only a ritual, which is followed mechanically. In short, the overall scenario of

higher education in India did not match with the global quality standards (Nagoba, and Mantri, 2015). Students were concerned only for getting high marks and they study only for grabbing jobs. There was absence of creativity in the students' though they were hard-working but lacked innovation. Thus an urgent transformation was required in the Indian higher education system leading to the implementation of student-centred learning.

Various researches showed what teachers do in class play a vital role in determining in students' achievement and learning. The most effective way as identified by researchers to bring out the best in students' is to give them industrial exposure and promote effective thinking. The above aspects were lacking in the traditional approach as it was dominated by the teacher making the students' mere passive receivers leading to memorisation of data rather than acquiring skills. This is exactly where the role of student-centred learning came into play.

The Education International project-Time for a New Paradigm in Education: Student Centred Learning, defined Student-Centred Learning (SCL) is given as- Student-Centred Learning represents both a mind-set and a culture within a given higher education institution and is a learning approach which is broadly related to, and supported by, constructivist theories of learning. It is characterized by innovative methods of teaching which aim to promote learning in communication with teachers and other learners and which take students seriously as active participants in their own learning, fostering transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and reflective thinking. Student centred teaching approach should constitute of the following factors:

- The reliance on active rather than passive learning;
- An emphasis on deep learning and understanding;
- Increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student;
- An increased sense of autonomy in the learner;
- An interdependence between teacher and learner;
- Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship; and
- A reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process on the part of both the teacher and the learner.

Previously most of the time in colleges and universities were occupied by professors lecturing and students listening. But with this shift the students and faculties share the focus. Team projects have been included so that students can share their ideas among themselves and learn to collaborate and communicate with one another. This enhances the students' ability to solve problems and in the process answer questions, formulate questions on their own and discuss and debate about the ideas generating inductive teaching and learning.(Felder. R 2017). Moving on we discuss about the different approaches through which the student-centred learning is being implemented in the Higher Education Institutes (HEI's).

5. Approaches to Implement Student-Centred Learning in HEI's

The criterion II of the NAAC, Institutional Accreditation, Manual for Self Study Report for Autonomous Colleges caters to the approaches through which an educational institution can serve it's students of different backgrounds and abilities through effective teaching- learning experiences. Interactive instructional techniques that can followed to ensure 'high thinking' of the students are also discussed in this criterion. The application of ICT resources are also considered as a measure. The efficiency of the techniques used to continuously evaluate the performance of teachers and students is also a major concern of this Criterion. The approaches the can be followed by HEI's are as follows:

1. Experiential Learning

- 1.1 Project Work: Project work/ Project based learning is considered as powerful teaching method that has extensive benefits for students ranging from critical thinking to project management and team work leading to self confidence. According to a research conducted by Autodesk Foundation studies have shown that this approach of learning helps in significant development of students' test scores. It also helps in teacher-student interaction as it is a learning by doing approach. Projects can be classified in two ways i.e. Mini Projects and Major Projects.
- 1.2 Participation in National and International Competitions: For Real time exposure students should be encouraged to participate at National and International Level. This helps in a holistic development of students.
- 1.3 Industrial Visits: Industry Visits help students enhance interpersonal skills and communication techniques. Students get exposure to the realistic industry practices and regulations thus helping in broadening the outlook with exposure to different work forces from different industries.
- 1.4 Guest Lectures: Guest lecture by eminent experts from industry and academics from across the world are organised to supplement the teaching process and provide experiential learning.

2. Participative Learning

- 2.1 Role Plays: Teachers may adopt to role play method especially in management and PG Technical courses to supplement Teaching by way of participative learning.
- 2.2 Team Work: All Departments should organize students activities to promote the spirit of Team work. The activities and Camp of NSS, institutional social responsibility through Red Cross ,Village Adoption, Tree plantation . Swatchh Bharat and Health awareness camp to help the students t to learn Art of living in a team for Social and community welfare.
- 2.3 Debates: Debates: Debates are followed in many of the subjects where students are required to come with different opinions, thought processes thus the learning process gets justified in the argue-mental way of learning.

3. Problem Solving Methodology

- 3.1 Case Studies: Case study method is adopted in teaching learning process to make the students have logical thinking and practical knowledge to develop problem solving ability. This is commonly adopted in management programmes as well as while teaching Business law, cyber laws etc.
- 3.2 Analysis and Reasoning: All questions in examination are based on analysis and reasoning. Free internet access in the library and wifi facilities in campus promotes the habit of self learning and discussion.
- 3.3 Research Activities: Research activities can be conducted in each Department under the guidance of senior faculty where the students of different semester get knowledge about emerging area and help them to promote in Research aptitude.
- 3.4 Discussions: University follows the discussions methods in many of the subjects as it makes the students to think wide and participate in coming up with the opinions & suggestions to check their current knowledge. Discussions are held basically in soft skills, managerial communications, business adoptions etc.

The above mentioned approaches can be practised in all small, medium and large scale institutions enhancing the engagement of both students and teachers and also the implementation of the modern

student- centred approach, catering to the three major areas specified in Criterion II of the report. Along with these several other courses and foundation programmes can be implemented by the colleges and universities for holistic development of it's students and increasing the scores of colleges/ universities itself.

6. Conclusion

Quality education is a prerequisite for national, regional and global development. For delivery of quality education, quality teachers who are committed to teaching and equipped with necessary knowledge, skills and competencies for effective teaching is needed. Teachers must give a thought of adopting studentcentered approach of teaching so as to bring about quality education in higher education. In context to that though the Student-centred learning approach focuses on the students' but it begins with the teachers. Teachers encourage student-centered learning by allowing students to share in decisions, believing in their capacity to lead, and remembering how it feels to learn. Student-centered classrooms include students in planning, implementation, and assessments. Involving the learners in these decisions will place more work on them, which can be a good thing. Teachers must become comfortable with changing their leadership style from directive to consultative -- from "Do as I say" to "Based on your needs, let's co-develop and implement a plan of action." Achieving this goal will not only help in understanding students' value but also make a significant difference in the entire education system of the country. This will also help in developing better personnel helping in the holistic development of the students leading to an overall development of the country as discussed above.

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