QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Quality Enhancement in higher education in India needs overhauling of the whole system. Though India has one of the largest higher education system in the world, there are certain challenges being faced by the country in the modern competitive world. This is an age of transformation in the education world and it is the prime agenda of all the countries with an international dimension. To go with equal pace with the developed nations and to meet the international standards, assurance of quality education is mandatory. The teachers and the taught need to be made aware of the upcoming changes and a desire to adapt them. The education has to be made student centric and the gap between education and employability needs to be bridged. The students need to be research oriented and education should be project based. It has to be more practical and less theoretical. The vocational training would definitely help students acquire the much needed skills to be more versatile and it would help them enhance their eligibility for good jobs available in the market. National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) is paving way for the changes required in the field of education and would definitely make the country one of the best education hub for the world.

Quality Enhancement is a process of improvement. It has two strands. First, it is the enhancement of individual learners' improvement of his attributes, knowledge, ability, skills, capacity, and thereby his potential. Second, it is improvement in the quality of the program of study or institution.

In Quality enhancement, generally, we focus on the students' learning which

equips them with the requisite knowledge and skills useful, both to the individual and the society. Higher Education System in India over the years has undergone rapid expansion and transformation. Currently, it is the largest in the world enrolling 70million students. It ranks 26th in the world. It is the single largest provider of global talent with one in four graduates in the world being a product of the Indian system. India has one of the largest higher education system in the world. Over the last two decades, India has remarkably transformed its Higher Education landscape. It has created widespread access to low cost high quality university education for students of all levels.

But there are relatively few high quality educational institutes in India. The world-class institutions are mainly limited to IITs, IIMs etc. But the number of students in these institutes is only one percent of the total students aspiring for higher education. There is definitely, a need for an increase in the number of high-quality education centres in India.

To meet the growing demand, there has been growth of private higher education institutions. A significant number of reputed private Institutions were accorded the states of deemed universities.

Many wealthy business groups in India are investing in education; some with educational background, others with business backgrounds. Today in this age of globalisation, quality in higher education has become a primary agenda of the countries worldwide. Education has become a national concern in developing countries with an international dimension. To cope with this changing context, developing countries have been pressurized to ensure and assure the quality of higher education at a rationally comparable and internationally acceptable standard. Consequently, developing countries like India and China require to overhaul their educational systems to meet the growing national needs and International Standards.

An objective analysis of and a close look at the Indian higher education will lead us to conclude that it is facing an unprecedented transformation in the near future. It has brought challenges before itself which need close examination for making it more relevant to National needs and International Standards

There is a huge mismatch between what is being taught in educational institutions and the knowledge, skills, and behaviour businesses and

organisations are looking for in new recruits. Even students feel that their education lack relevance to jobs. Education, that bridges the gap between education and employability, is missing. They are hoping for a bright future, which will be "Linking Education to Careers."

The paucity of jobs for the youth is the biggest crisis facing our country right now, even as the third wave is gradually subsiding. The situation is alarming where lakhs of applicants are there for few hundred jobs. In fact, large number of youth are unable to find jobs with their existing level of skill sets. Employers generally complain that most of the graduates and post graduates they hire are deficient even in basic skills such as writing, problem-solving and critical thinking. It is mainly due to the fact that the present system of higher Education is more theoretical. There is no project based learning. Young graduates need to learn new skills, especially vocational skills that can earn them a job and secure their future.

The greatest challenge facing higher education is paucity of regular faculty. Facts verify that around 30-40% of the faculty positions are lying vacant. More than 2/3 of college teachers today are not appointed on regular basis, but are hired on adhoc basis serving on year to year contracts, and that too not on full grades. Moreover, they are hired at times without appearing for an interview as is the system involved in the appointment of the regular teachers on sanctioned posts.

Mushrooming of low-quality Institutes is another challenge before the qualitative higher educational systems such as education training colleges, engineering and other professional institutes. These lack capacity, infrastructure and are only fleecing money from students and their parents. Financial exploitation of the teaching faculty is also rampant over there.

Pedagogy and assessment are focussed on input and rote learning. Students have little opportunities to develop a wide range of multi-dimensional skills, including critical thinking, analytical reasoning, problem solving, and collaborative working. We have outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy and poor quality of teaching.

The present system of Higher Education suffers from the lack of high quality research and innovation outputs. To state the truth, there is no research as such in the affiliated colleges. Most of the faculty members do not undertake

research in the field of higher education in India, only few are observed to do research work in higher education. We cannot expect university research prosper with most of the teachers not engaging in research in comparison with entire higher education faculty being expected to do research in advanced countries.

India does not have enough high-quality researchers. There are few opportunities for inter-disciplinary and multi –disciplinary working, lack of early-stage research work experiences, a weak ecosystem for innovation and low levels of industry engagement.

The faculty under the present higher Education System suffers from a complete lack of responsibility and accountability. It is a hard fact that most of the faculty members do not have a passion or taste for teaching and as a result do not aspire to improve their capacity and capabilities especially when they are bound to get promotions in respect of higher grades and emoluments not by virtue of their additional attainments and achievements but on account of years that they put in service. Until and unless, their contribution towards research work or performance are made the determining criteria for their career advancement, higher education would continue to suffer. Most of the faculty lack quality in teaching, research and training.

India has been lacking in attaining a high global position in academic excellence. We can attain a level of excellence like that of the other advanced countries like U.S. We can enhance the quality in our higher educational system by innovating methods and approaches in higher education .This can be achieved by using new technologies to enrich teaching and learning and improve the students' experience. Technology is transforming all sections of the society be it health sector, financial world, entertainment and even government. These changes can definitely make the world a better place. The education sector has also been positively influenced by it. The technological Innovations can give classrooms a new look.

The pandemic has emphasised the pace of change in the modern educational world. With digital transformation and adoption of technology, globally, the traditional method of teaching -learning is being replaced. With the emergence of different technologies in the education sector to get jobs , virtual learning is in vogue as it offers flexibility and is much convenient to

learners. The process of E-learning has been streamlined by institutions with virtual learning tools. The video conferencing tools and online live interactions offer students and teachers a class room experience. The growing awareness about technology and better competence in handling tools is making online education more feasible and efficient. The blended technology and classroom teaching together will create a quality and personalized curriculum for the students.

Education resources can be accessed from any part of the world, thanks to the cloud computing technology. Digital learning encourages concept based learning and develops key skills in students to excel in their career path. It also makes a shift from Teacher-centric learning to student- centric education. The Govt. has played significant role in spreading digitalization with digital India and Atam Nirbhar Bharat initiatives. The technology helps teachers to get a better insight into a student's academic growth and performance. The future of learning will be determined by the emerging technologies and innovative pedagogies in the education sector. In the next few years, the role of teachers will be transformed completely from knowledge providers to knowledge facilitators.

Learning through games improves the students' engagement by catching their attention and increasing their interest in the specific subject area knowledge. This form of learning allows students to test their results with knowledge, skills and intuition. Learning through games facilitates students to develop their skills and makes the process enjoyable, effective and experimental. These new developments in Educational technology will develop social, emotional skills in students. The tools allow students to learn beyond the classroom irrespective of geographical boundaries.

There is a rise in demand for technical courses to match the change in the industrial requirement. A wide variety of programs have opened up the market for other avenues. To cater to the demand of the industrial world, students are exploring vocational courses in areas such as photography, video-making, video games, fashion designing, retail marketing, communications, and other fields such as e-commerce, hospitality, food and catering, data science, machine learning, artificial intelligence etc.

College/university students and teachers can connect with each other through social network sites created on computers, even if they are thousands of

miles away from each other. Through these sites, they are able to organize seminars conferences, contests, and meetings. Students from other educational institutions can use social media to exchange ideas. Widespread access of Internet has accelerated the implementation of technological innovations in the Education sector. Lap Tops and Tablets are also being customized to meet specific educational needs. The future of higher Education certainly looks bright due to fast increasing growth of technology. The curriculum should be more student centric. The aim should be to straighten and shorten the path from studies to job. So, the curriculum needs to be updated to make it more efficient.

The topics of the curriculum are dogmatic and stale. The curriculum needs to be multi- dimensional. Students should be offered a choice to opt for multiple courses in the first year. The target of the syllabus should be to test the students for projects and not testing them in the conventional system of exams. Exams should be in the innovative method. Students must also be given the facility to switch over to other streams/subjects according to their preferences/taste.

Industrial collaborations should be made by the higher educational Institutions and for the organization of expert talks, internships, projects, career counselling and placements and sharing of experience and moreover, to know the industrial requirements that can be introduced in the curriculum.

Higher educational Institutes can enhance their quality, reputation, and credibility through student and faculty exchange programs with other national and international higher education universities. The government should encourage collaboration between Indian higher Educational Institutions and other top notch research centres and universities.

Mostly rich persons and big corporate houses run the revenue generating educational institutions as education has become a business for them. What is required today is to make their educational institutes more competitive. Let them compete with each other in an open manner other than slugging it out under the carpet.

To bring about qualitative change in higher education, teacher- taught role is very prominent. Teachers should learn to adapt to the changing world and its needs and make classroom teaching more interactive. Good teachers are

enthusiastic, agile, observant, sharp, and responsive who always keep an open mind to engage their students to get excited about learning. They try different teaching styles of Interactive sessions with students in the class rooms. Students often lose interest in one way lecture style teaching. Interactive teaching gives an importance to students' active participation which makes it exciting and enjoyable to them. One must understand that: Telling is not teaching and listening is not learning. This type of teaching can include group discussions, brain storming in group sessions, question and answer sessions.

The Government of India has already grasped and understood this problem and there by devising plans and strategies to enhance the quality of higher education. The government has played a significant role in spreading digitization with Digital India and Atam Nirbhar Bharat initiatives. National Education Policy 2020 is paving the way for overhauling of the complete higher education system. The key points of this Policy are accessibility, affordability, accountability and of course quality. The efforts and energy put in by the Govt. of India by way of its digital initiatives and National Education Policy 2020 will definitely go a long way to meet the challenges our Higher Education system is confronted with, leading finally to its quality enhancement.

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