

Review

Quality improvement in Higher Education in India: A Review

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The University Education Report had set goals for development of higher education in the country. While articulating these goals Ramakrishnan Commission on University Education, 1948-49 put it in the following words: "The most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavor to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it the powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals. In the present context, education policies and strategies have to reckon with emerging challenges and opportunities that come from increasing globalization. The task of nation building has to take into account increasing demand for certain professional skills and knowledge that is linked to the labour market. The definition of quality teaching depends on the meaning of "quality", a multi-layered and complex word. Quality can be defined as an outcome, a property, or a process. Therefore it is hardly surprising that the phrase "quality teaching" has been given several definitions because definitions of quality are "stakeholder relative". The National Policy on higher education of 1986 translate this vision of Radhakrishnan and Kothari Commission in five principles goals for higher education which include Greater Access, Equal access (or equity), Quality and excellence, Relevance and Promotion of social Values . The policy directions and actions covered in the 1992 "Program of Action "have been developed in a manner such that it translates these goals in to practice, giving the importance of the first three goals, namely Access, Equal Access and quality.

Key words: Professional skills, demand for knowledge, university education, quality teaching, stakeholder relative, greater access, quality and excellence, labour market, promotion of social values, equal access, nation building.

INTRODUCTION

The University Education Report had set goals for development of higher education in the country. While articulating these goals Ramakrishnan Commission on University Education, 1948-49 put it in following words: "The most important and urgent reform needed in education is to transform it, to endeavor to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it the powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for the realization of the national goals. For this purpose, education should be developed so as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the process of modernization and cultivate social, moral and spiritual values."

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social Values . The policy directions and actions covered in the 1992 "Program of Action "have been developed in a manner such that it translates these goals in to practice, giving the importance of the first three goals, namely Access, Equal Access and quality.

Meaning of Quality

The definition of quality teaching depends on the meaning of "quality", a multi-layered and complex word. Quality can be defined as an outcome, a property, or a process. Therefore it is hardly surprising that the phrase "quality teaching" has been given several definitions because definitions of quality are "stakeholder relative" (Harvey et al., 1992). Tam (2001) also found that all stakeholders held their own view of what quality in education means to them. Some scholars define quality in higher education as the process of quality enhancement.

Hau (1996) argues that quality in higher education and quality teaching in particular, springs from a never-ending process of reduction and elimination of defects. Argyris and Schön (1974) believe that quality is driven by the inquest: "Are we doing things right?" and by the complementary question: "Are we doing the right things?" Definitions of quality in higher education as an outcome, a property or a process are not necessarily in conflict, and can potentially be used by higher education institutions as complementary. As a result, the review does not adopt one definition of quality teaching and opts instead to look into how the institutions have defined quality education. Vision and Goals India has emerged as a global leader and a strong nation at the turn of this century.

Education is the key to the task of nation building as well as to provide requisite knowledge and skills required for sustained growth of the economy and to ensure overall progress. The Indian education system recognizes the role of education in instilling the values of secularism, egalitarianism, respect for democratic traditions and civil liberties and quest for justice. It aims at creating citizens equipped with necessary knowledge, skills and values to build an inclusive, just and progressive society. The three pillars of education are expansion, inclusion and excellence. Our Vision is to realize India's human resource potential to its fullest, with equity and excellence.

Education in a Changing Global Scenario

In the present context, education policies and strategies have to reckon with emerging challenges and opportunities that come from increasing globalization. The task of nation building has to take into account increasing demand for certain professional skills and knowledge that is linked to the labour market. A globalized world will ultimately require the outsourcing of human skills in regions which will witness a "demographic deficit". Skilled human capital will have to be imported to certain regions to sustain economic growth. This can offer tremendous opportunities for employment and growth provided the youth are equipped with requisite knowledge and skills in this era of Globalization and Internationalization of education, there will be impetus to mobility of people including students, teachers and researchers.

The main challenge, therefore, is to provide the requisite opportunities through investment in schools, colleges and universities. The access to quality education for all will create an environment whereby the fruits of development and growing opportunities are available to all sections. A further challenge is to ensure that the foreign institutions coming to India also fit in with the developmental goals of our nation. Faced with the complexity of current and future global challenges, institutions of education have

the social responsibility to advance our understanding of multifaceted issues, which involve social, economic, scientific and cultural dimensions and our ability to respond to them.

Quality Improvement In Higher Education

Academic Reform Transformation of higher education requires specific strategies for academic reforms at the institutional level. Quality improvement in higher education has been initiated through restructuring academic programmes to ensure their relevance to modern market demands. Complete revamping of teaching/learning methods from instruction and rote learning to interactive process that encourages creativity and innovation and is based on compulsory seminar-tutorials is being advocated in the universities and colleges. Some universities have begun to follow semester system, modification in assessment and examination methods, teachers' assessment, acceptance of grade and credit system and other related reforms.

The introduction of credit system in Indian universities will contribute to the development of quality in higher education through using a common and transparent system for the measurement and expression of academic work and learning outcomes of the students. This will also facilitate the mutual recognition of degree and qualification and will also ensure compatibility with the academic norms practiced in similar institutions in India and abroad. UGC has written to all universities about the need to adopt credit system with credit accumulation along with other academic reforms while some of the universities have introduced the system recently, many others are in the process of introducing the same. It is suggested to introduce the credit system in phases. In the first phase the universities may consider to adopt the credit system in a few departments followed by the acceptance of the credit system across all departments. In the second phase, universities may ask all the autonomous colleges to follow the credit system and as the process develops, the credit system may be introduced at the undergraduate level. The whole process may take a longer time period depending on the maturity of the academic system.

Technical Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP) was conceived and designed as a long term project to support excellence and transformation in Technical Education in the country. TEQIP Phase-I implemented with the assistance of World Bank as a centrally coordinated Central and State Sector Project with a total cost of Rs. 1,339 crore from March 2003 to March 2009. Out of this Rs. 306 crore was Central Component and the remaining Rs. 1033 crore was State Component. The cumulative expenditure up to 31st March, 2009 was Rs. 1321.80 crore which is 99% of the total project allocation. Based on the achievements made

during TEQIP Phase-I, TEQIP Phase-II is to be implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) with the assistance of the World Bank at a total cost of Rs. 2,430 crores out of which Rs. 1395.50 cores will be World Bank assistance, Rs. 500 crore Central contribution and Rs. 518.50 crore State contribution from the participating States and Rs 16 crore from the private unaided institutions. The funding pattern will be 75:25 between the Centre and the participating States and for North Eastern States it will be 90:10. The TEQIP-II project is for duration of 4 years covering about 200 institutions based on competitive funding and likely to be effective from 2010-11. The central objective of the 11th plan is now focused on "Expansion of enrolment in higher education with inclusiveness, quality, and relevant education and supported by necessary Academic Reforms in the university and college system."

These studies have given necessary input in evolving the perspective on each of these objectives. Since these studies are based on the serious research and examination of official data, the findings in many ways are new and insightful. The finding also presents the emerging issues in higher education system in the country and the possible way out. Since the studies are rich and new in their content the UGC decided to publish them in the form of a report for the use of the academic community. We are hopeful that the central and state government, academic administrator, policy maker, educational institutions, and researchers will find the insights of these studies of use for various purposes.

Declaration of public expenditure has been uniform across all State

It is not surprising to observe that there has been almost a uniform pattern of deceleration of public expenditure in higher education across all states, this fact of uniform pattern of deceleration of public expenditure across all states proves a systemic trend and slow withdrawal of state funding of higher education. It may, however, quite interesting to note that three states -Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, showing the highest deceleration in growth rate of public expenditure on higher education, are those states which, along with Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, experienced a greater degree of privatization and even commercialization of higher education. States like Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Assam, Kerala, and Madhya Pradesh show lesser degree of deceleration in public expenditure on higher education.

Role of institutional component in quality teaching.

- **Executive body**

Institutional leadership and decision-making bodies have

a fundamental role to play in shaping the institutional quality culture. They are often the initiators of quality teaching initiatives. A sustained commitment to quality teaching by senior management is necessary for leading the whole institution towards the common goal of enhancing the quality of teaching. In the definition of quality teaching Involving teachers ensures that the initiatives are responsive to needs and promotes a sense of ownership. Adequate time, human resources, funding and facilities must be dedicated. Opportunities can also stem from external factors that encourage institutional reflection on quality.

- **Teachers**

New Dimensions of their Role Special emphasis on value-oriented education will impart a new dimension to the role of the teacher. For value-orientation cannot be imparted without teachers' own value-orientation and integral development of personality cannot be fulfilled without teachers developing their own integral personality. The role of the teacher will include the task of changing the tendencies of egoism and domination that are the ultimate causes of division and war. It is particularly for this reason that a new programme of teaches, training has to be envisaged, and this programme will not only cater to the continuous development of professional skills but also continuous development of teachers' ethical and spiritual abilities.

Quality teaching initiatives provide an occasion for teachers to think about their own role in the enhancement of quality: these initiatives help them to teach better. Technology-based teaching (e.g. the e-learning platform), intranets and discussion forums are essential tools that can improve student-to-teacher interaction and assess student progress. Teachers are the central actors for a reflection on the evaluation criteria of quality teaching: Which aspects have to be addressed and which changes have to be put in practice? Collaboration with the quality units in the design and implementation of curricula can be a good starting point. Teaching is a dynamic activity, which has strongly subjective aspects that depend on personal and collective philosophy.

- **Students**

The main primary beneficiaries of quality teaching initiatives are Students. Students can collaborate with teachers and leaders in the definition of the initiative Interaction in teaching, learning environments, quality and teacher attitudes are essential. Student groups can bring new ideas and influence the institutional policy on quality teaching by launching discussions and raising problems. These special bodies dedicated to the implementation and monitoring of quality teaching policies

play a pivotal role in supporting, explaining and advocating institution-wide policy on quality teaching. External inputs and good practices examples can be captivated through an open-oriented approach that is creating a communication network with quality assurance agencies and external partners.

CONCLUSION

Quality has both absolute and relative meanings. The concept of absoluteness in quality props up the moral of the higher education system at the delivery end and at the receiving end i.e. Institutional and Students respectively. The quality of a higher education system may be seen from the point of view of norms and standards, which may evolve depending on the need of the hour. The alternative dynamics for teacher preparation and the sustaining quality in teacher input, like: Curriculum design and development; Curricular practices vis-à-vis Evaluation of learner's performance and progress vis-à-vis curriculum evaluation; and, Quality management practices become crucial. The quality of these components may also differ from institution to institution. Therefore, sharing of the experiences among institutions on quality issues may generate ideas for evolving norms and strategies for their quality assurance of management processes, curricular inputs and practices and the evaluation system as well.

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