

Improving Quality in Education, Excellence and Productivity in Universities of Higher Learning

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ABSTRACT

The term 'quality' is in itself a great virtue, the presence of which in a person makes him a model for the whole community; the spark of it in an object makes, it no less than a diamond and the essence of the virtuous term in work gives life to it. Higher education has to play a key role in shaping the future of man and society in global era. In this context the role of education system is not just restricted to prepare the students to face the future challenges and complexities. Quality, excellence, productivity and perfection in universities are the functions of many conscious imitative and sustained hard work. Quality is a result of many painstaking efforts. Now the nation as a whole should rise to the occasion and compel the universities to be on the track of quality. The spirit of the decade which was announced as "The decade of quality assurances in higher education" should be translated into concrete action so that India will have "model" quality based universities which are excellent, productive and complete quality institutions among the universities of the world.

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Quality assurance and quality sustainability are the two key terms that we hear often these days in institutions offering higher education in our country. Quality largely depends on the type of instructional inputs given by the teacher to his taught. Factors that affect the selection of instructional inputs (to make teaching learning process effective) are also presented. Group controlled learning processes and how a teacher incorporates these techniques are also included. When these techniques are used they provide rooms for the learner's self-development and active participation in the teaching-learning process in institutions of higher learning facilitating development of higher cognitive abilities and affective attributes.

The term 'quality' is in itself a great virtue, the presence of which in a person makes him a model for the whole community; the spark of it in an object makes, it no less than a diamond and the essence of the virtuous term in work gives life to it. If this virtue is attached to the work of the teacher then it signifies a great responsibility born upon the shoulders of those who are nation builders, the architects of destiny, occupying the place just next to the Almighty.

Teaching is not to be regarded as a static accomplishment like riding a bicycle or keeping a leader; it is like all arts of high ambition- a strategy in the face of an impossible task.

If there is one thing that the U.S. President Barak Obama is passionate about, "it is education; Obama firmly believes that the quality teachers

are the need of the hour if the U.S. School education is to compete with best in the world.” This is about US but is of great concern for India too. It is a proven fact that the greatness of a country does not depend on lofty buildings and gigantic projects. It depends upon teachers. A teacher has been respected and worshipped throughout human history because of their noble mission. ‘Good education requires good teachers’.

The profession of teacher prepares man to transform the present crisis stricken society into future utopia. Teacher education is a professional course; professionalism in teacher education refers to ‘commitment to excellence’. In other words, it refer to the ability to work in a world of change and over increasing accountability.

The all-round development of children depends much upon the professional competencies and efficiency of teachers. According to the International commission on the development of Education (UNESCO, 1972;)

“The teacher’s duty is less and less to inculcate knowledge and more and more to encourage thinking; his formal function apart he will have to become more and more an advisor, a partner to talk to; someone who helps seek out conflicting arguments rather than handing out readymade truths. He will have to devote more time and energy to productive and creative activates; interaction, discussion, stimulation, understanding, encouragement”.

With such great task of the teacher, courses for preparing the individual as a teacher require great attention specially as for as quality areas are concern. Professionalism in teacher education is influenced by as many factors that

directly or indirectly exert bearing upon the life of the individual.

Higher education has to play a key role in shaping the future of man and society in global era In this context the role of education system is not just restricted to prepare the students to face the future challenges and complexities. Rather, the system must enable learners to plan their future choices a little more intelligently. Hence the focus will have to shift from conservative knowledge system. All type of changes must be a higher education like curriculum, learner autonomy, technology and other areas, for quality improvement in changing scenario.

The Indian System of higher education which has encompassed enormous number of institutions, universities, colleges, affiliated institutions of higher and professional learning along with huge strength of students & scholars, population reveals its uniqueness in many respect. Having mainly identified with affiliated institutions, Indian system of higher education has posed serious threats to maintenance and promotion of academic standard of university education.

Quality is the cornerstone of today’s education system. What ‘purity of tone’ is to the music, ‘ quality’ is to the university. Quality makes a university good or bad, commendable or reprehensible. The drive for quality around the globe is becoming a matter of life and death for educational system. In the current context of globalization, scaling heights in pursuit of quality, striving for excellence, increasing of productiveness and approaching of perfection is imperative for the educational system. It is high time for the functionaries and beneficiaries of educational system at higher and institutional levels to sit down, chart out quality agenda and initiate

actions on a war footing for fostering the complete quality culture (CQC) in our educational system. The CQC lays a firm foundation for stable and healthy education system.

India as nation is collectively wasting public and private money in duplication and replication of courses, carrying over obsolescence in different universities. Our universities rarely make efforts to discover, produce, process, refine and offer more and more original, innovative and indigenised courses which are relevant to the soil and sons/daughters of India.

All the problems (Academic, administrative disciplinary) of universities are rooted in the lack of quality. Due to this lackness, the universities produce 'unfinished' students, who fail to fulfil the expectations of their life and society. This problem has a negative chain effect throughout the society. Students who are 'unfinished' become unproductive and burden to the society. Hence, universities which are producing unfinished graduates are sick universities and deserve a thorough health check-up and quality treatment. The universities being the apex temples of learning, the concern for quality in their corporate composition and functioning is of crucial importance. The quality in the university system should touch the Indian life and help to improve their standard of living.

It is heartening to note that the union Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has observed the decade as "years of quality assurance in higher education". In order to translate the declaration of the MHRD into a reality requires "national firm will" to invest required amount of money in the higher education

sector. Since the declaration is done by MHRD, naturally the complete quality culture should first begin at the MHRD itself and then it should percolate down to all educational Institution. The MHRD should evolve and implement a 'National quality Master plans for universities and colleges.

The academic and quality regulatory authorities like UGC, NAAC, AICTE, N.BA, NCTE, DEC, DOE, DOEACC, MC, IIQM, QCI, etc. are involved in the groundwork for bringing 'CQC' in Indian higher education. Indian academic quality marking and crediting agencies should pool the 'quality practices' prevalent throughout the world and disseminate them to all the universities for consideration. The experience and expertise of these agencies and their members all over the world including company-rating agencies may be tapped in this regard.

Quality, excellence, productivity and perfection in universities are the functions of many conscious imitative and sustained hard work. Quality is a result of many painstaking efforts. Now the nation as a whole should rise to the occasion and compel the universities to be on the track of quality. In this context the following measures have to be adopted.

1. Focus on vision and mission, goals, objectives (VMGAO) : In the light of the national values enshrined in the constitution of India, each university should evolve vision and mission statements specific to the mandate and jurisdiction of the university. The universities should make all efforts to bring "goodness of fit" between its VMGAO and programmes, courses and activities. Each university should aim at achievement of 100% quality and to become world's top quality university. The universities should aim at achievement the targets of producing

the students who should be individuals with exceptional performances and deserve high rank on quality scale. The “warmth of satisfaction” of students should be the indicator of the quality in the university.

2. Establishment of internal total quality assessment and assurance division (ITQA&A) : Each university should establish this division to self - evaluate the quality of its constituent and affiliated departments, colleges, sections programmes, courses and all the activities. This division should be in-house through academic quality auditor should undertake “total internal introspection” for reforming the university towards excellence and fitness for purpose.

3. World class curriculum, instruction and evaluation: Each university should evolve up-to-date, flexible, relevant and meaningful world class curriculum for each of the subject course offered. The university should develop exhaustive “resource material” on each unit included in the syllabus. Students should be subjected to both ‘formative and summative’ evaluation using many psycho and eudiometric tests.

4. Culture of quick communication : The universities should quicken the ‘speed’ of movement of files and process of decision making and information concerned, so that the culture of quick communication/correspondence becomes a routine practice.

5. Use of information communication technology (ICT) : The universities should transform themselves into e-universities. They should develop management information system (MIS) on systematic lines so that access and retrieval may become quick. Modern media like

telephone, e-mail, facsimile, teleconferencing etc. to effect modernization may prevail for speedy action.

6. Practice of strategic quality management concept : The quality management concept should be used for self rating as well as external rating. This will help in professional management culture and culminate in qualitative purposeful functioning of universities.

7. Enhancing the quality of the functionaries: The quality of the universities depend on the large extent on the quality of the officers, personnel, authorities and the teachers. Hence the university should take utmost care while appointing /electing the functionaries. People who have high qualification, commitment competence, integrity and total dedication to the cause of university system, should only be allowed to enter the system.

The campus of the university should be kept very clean and lush green. The environment of the campus should automatically instil the spirit of learning among the students and visitors.

9. Practice of twin principles- transparency and accountability : In fact the accountability and performance evaluation are the acid tests for measuring the effectiveness of the universities, official secrets and appreciation for ‘right to information’ must be there.

10. Research and development (R&D) on quality in education :

The MHRD, AICTE, NCTE, UGC, MCI, DCI, NCERT, NUEPA, ICSSR, ICAR etc. should fund R&D Projects on quality in education . The universities using the fund should search and re-search quality in all their sub-systems in order to develop them on quality lines.

11. Students care and placement :

All the genuine problems and grievances of the students should be addressed by correcting the deficiencies and defects in the university system. The university system should be student's friendly and should have utmost caring and congenial atmosphere for their all-round development. The university should make all possible efforts to provide good placement to the students.

12. Assessment and accreditation :

All the universities in India should voluntarily undergo the scientific institution evaluation process of self assessment and external assessment for clearly determining how far the university has progressed and how much further it should progress. They should keep in mind ISO-9000:2000 specifications for educational institutions while making critical assessment. The principles of natural evolution viz. 'struggle for existence and survival of the fittest' hold well in the quality context for our universities.

Conclusion:

The purpose of establishment of the university will be fulfilled only when the university moves on the (VMGAO), vision, mission, goals and objectives, quality road map by attaining and

excelling the stringent norms and standard as well as when it proves its competence as a useful and productive body corporate. The spirit of the decade which was announced as "The decade of quality assurances in higher education" should be translated into concrete action so that India will have "model" quality based universities which are excellent, productive and complete quality institutions among the universities of the world.

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