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HIGHER EDUCATION CONDITION OF INDIA IS WORRYING – NEED ATTENTION

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Abstract

The changes and challenges in higher education in the 21st century where internet and digital technologies are reshaping the way we think and live. Our daily lives are intertwined with digital technologies like social media, smart-phone, tablets and e-commerce just to name a few. It is worrying that India does not have any world class institution of higher learning and that the key indicators of business education were not encouraging. The world is witnessing knowledge explosion but India is lagging behind in terms of quality and universal education. We are no doubt a great and upcoming nation, that being the position, we have far greater challenges compared to the developed countries. The government is keen to create world-class universities. It must understand that world-class institutes are not created; they evolve over decades and centuries, nurtured by respect for knowledge, policy and adequate funds. Contrary to the global trend, pioneering educational institutions of India languish and decay, instead of evolving to greatness. In this observational study covers engendering technological excellence in higher education through India's education system, crisis in India's higher education, our countries management education system failure, India needs own model of management education, some of Critical Quality factors in management education, few attributes to draw attention, various steps to improve education quality and student achievement with outcome based education and follow-up of developed economies phenomenon-based learning system.

Key words: Higher Education, Critical Quality factors, educational institutions, India

Introduction

While the Indian education system has evolved from conventional learning methods to new technologies such as laptops, tablets and digital content, there is a lot of room for improvement on a conceptual level. In Indian schools, the focus is on textbook learning, syllabus coverage and performance in examinations. What stands out in phenomenon-based teaching is that it's the students who initiate the learning process by asking questions about various issues in and around the world or other concepts they might be interested in. Unlike rote learning, where learning is superficial, this method makes learning deeper and more natural. To gain knowledge, one should have an inquisitive mind that can help seek answers. The textbook way of learning employed in Indian schools limit a child's ability to think, question and reflect upon what they have learnt. A textbook supplies ready-made answers to questions, and most of the times students are unaware of what to do with the responses except reproducing them during tests.

Education system in India

It is worrying that India does not have any world class institution of higher learning and that the key indicators of business education were not encouraging. The world is witnessing knowledge explosion but India is lagging behind in terms of quality and universal education. We are no doubt a great and upcoming nation, that being the position, we have far greater challenges compared to the developed countries. On the other hand, phenomenon-based teaching enables a child to think, question and ponder, thus helping them apply the knowledge they have acquired, where necessary. They don't have to learn theories and concepts by rote and they would not be assessed on their ability to memorise concepts and reproduce them on paper. In phenomenon-based learning, a child will have to apply a variety of skills, brainstorm and wear their thinking hats to get a clearer understanding of concepts. It also helps them relate a variety of problems to real-life situations, thus reducing a phenomenon to its most fundamental level to aid in its understanding.

The examination system adopted in most schools in India sends out a message that every student needs to toil hard to succeed as their future is entirely dependent on their performance in the myriad examinations they take. However, in this process, several relevant kinds of knowledge that a student should acquire are brushed aside as they are considered not worth examining academically. Students also start neglecting a topic or a subject when they are unable to make a connection with it. As a result, they get stuck and struggle to score good marks.

The phenomenon-based approach helps increase the authenticity of learning significantly and looks beyond the predictive text. In such a learning, understanding and studying the phenomenon go hand in hand. Therefore, adding value to all types of learning situations.

The phenomenon-based learning introduced in Finnish schools makes learning an interesting and organic process for students. They need not accept easy answers or believe what is written in textbooks blindly. The Indian education system should soon give up on its obsession with textbooks and come out from the old-fashioned way of teaching students for an outcome-based education. Indian schools should be able to rethink and redesign their curriculum for the holistic development of students. They should, however, refrain from blindly copying these methods and develop a system that is best suited for the Indian education scenario.

The crisis in India's higher education

The government is keen to create world-class universities. It must understand that world-class institutes are not created; they evolve over decades and centuries, nurtured by respect for knowledge, policy and adequate funds. Contrary to the global trend, pioneering educational institutions of India languish and decay, instead of evolving to greatness.

Take the one of India's earliest College, established in 1860. It is a shadow of its original self. When it celebrated its first centenary, it had 1,139 students and a 103-strong teaching staff. A College of Arts and Commerce branched off in 1992. The data it supplied to the National Assessment and Accreditation Council for 2014-15 show a student intake of 2,500, and a faculty strength of 26. Of the faculty members, only 19 are permanent and none is a professor. The student strength has more than doubled while the number of those on hand to teach them has dwindled to a quarter. Quantity affects quality in such matters. The felicity of expression in the principal's message to students is a good guide to the standards of quality now maintained at one of the country's oldest institutions of higher learning in a state that is economically one of India's most advanced. This is a shame in itself. More, it mocks India's ambition to become a modern, knowledge economy.

Knowledge creation and dissemination are crucial for the economic growth and development of a country. Colleges and universities are central to this enterprise. However, the institutions that should have paved the way, given their

pioneering role in the country's higher education system, have been allowed to wither and the country's youth, badly let down. It points to policy and regulatory failure on a massive scale. India's higher education system needs a reboot.

Academicians believe that they have to make the changes to be distinctly relevant versus the low-cost providers. The main question is: How can they enable their students to achieve exceptionally high levels of performance on a consistent basis? High performers are:

- Smart- have a lot of knowledge and know how to apply it
- Savvy - know what they want to achieve and how to do it.
- Insightful - can learn and grow from their experiences.

The value of conceptual knowledge from MBA programs is that it develops the ability to think broadly and rigorously in business settings. The key point is that domain knowledge is acquired through hands-on training and experience in particular job settings, and is relevant to that domain.

- The value of action skills lies in the ability to achieve desired outcomes.
- Without action skills, conceptual and domain knowledge cannot lead to high levels of performance. Knowledge must be translated into action, and that requires action skills.
- These are the skills that enable individuals to set goals, to "sell" others on the value of those goals, and to work with and through others in their implementation.

Academicians should not fail to grasp the significance of changing environment and fail to respond in a meaningful way.

Management education has failed in India

The traditional model of management education that has been practised in the country for decades has failed to serve its purpose, says member of executive council at Tata Sons.

This is evident from the massive outflow of management students seeking admission in foreign universities each year and the low level of internationally published research papers emanating from Indian business schools, adds executive member, who is regarded as one of the world's leading management thinkers.

But green shoots of change are visible in the way management education is imparted in the country, with the arrival of some new-age business schools that appreciate the need of global managers for global businesses. In an interview, executive member tells Forbes India that top management institutes here need to change their enrolment strategy and even hire teachers who have trained at top global institutions by offering them competitive salaries. In a sense, management education has failed in the country. Otherwise, so many people wouldn't be leaving the country to study abroad. We don't see too many Americans, Germans or Japanese students leaving their home countries to pursue higher studies.

Then comes the aspect of building world-class institutions. None of the Indian universities features among the top 200 in the World University Rankings (brought out by Times Higher Education). If we look at research, the entire universe of Indian faculty across management schools has together published fewer papers in leading international journals than they have over the course of their career. And they weren't even the most productive in the world.

So business schools in India, especially the IIMs (Indian Institutes of Management), are stuck in the pre-1991 mentality, which is very much about controlling the supply of students that enter these schools and graduate each year, since there is no dearth of demand. In that sense, these institutes function more like selection agencies who, through the entrance process, do a pre-selection of brilliant students for potential recruiters to choose from. The intellectual processing that they do with these students over the course of the academic tenure becomes irrelevant.

This model doesn't serve the country since those who can afford it prefer to study abroad and the intelligent ones get a scholarship. A majority of the remaining students are served by low-quality management schools that have sprung up across the country. They get a degree in business education from these colleges, but it has no value.

All over the world, there's growing consensus that education systems are due for major improvements.

- The urgent challenges of change in management processes and the volatility of global business environment will force a redesign of many existing curricula.
- Balanced emphasis is necessary between domain-knowledge and multi-disciplinary nature of management tasks.
- Infosys Technologies' largest corporate education center in Mysore (14000 candidates at a time) is unique.
- Wipro, Genpact, Mahindra, Dr Reddy and HDFC Bank have a shared leadership program co-designed by them and delivered on their campuses.
- Education "Cities" and global knowledge hubs, which group educational institutions and even the companies on the same sites are common in emerging markets like India.

Recent shift of economic power from West to the East has also created new opportunities and challenges for Business Schools.

During the interactions with corporate in the run up to the Final Placement as also for the Summer Internship as Placement Head, we often came across some or the other corporate who had their own policy of taking interns only from Tier-I institutions. Likewise for Final Placement also they already had a list of Tier-I Institutes from where they would do their first hiring. Placement head have a close friend and ex-colleague who is in IIM-A. The Placement Manager does not have to reach out to corporate, the students form committee's and they do the corporate outreach for Internship, Live Projects, and Final Placement - PPT and Final process. The Placement manager has to just manage the event, time slotting, enabling availability of interview cabins, audi's etc. and secure the Placement Offers which goes through them.

In contrast, the Placement Managers of most competitive B-Schools, have to literally run and chase corporate and invite, push and prod them to visit their campus. In one of the prestigious telecom company, He was told by the HR Head that as a policy, they only go to Tier-I institutes over the phone, He shot back saying, He was sure HR may find Tier-I quality material in our B-School. He acknowledged the fact that the corporate's policy may seem to be

unjust to other institute grades but then they found out that this arrangement suits them best. Surprisingly, these corporate are even willing to pay entry fee to these Tier-I institutes to be among the first group/batch of companies to do the head hunting - picking the top performers.

So when Corporate of reputes themselves have bias against B-Schools and create a divide, what option is there for Institutions who perhaps have very good quality teaching through experienced and expert subject masters?

Industry-Academia collaborations would then be Tier-III corporate and Tier-III Institute and though the student has caliber, he would have to give Agni Pariksha working and slogging through corporate to earn himself the respect and title which would be his dream. Naturally he would not make it directly to Tata's, HCL or ITC but have to prove his worth to reach their doorstep.

Except for the Banking sector who have come out to align with B-Schools (again selectively) for promotion of syllabus which would best suit their needs and assuring in return Internship and Final Placement to students from those institutes. ICICI, Axis & Bank of Baroda have done tie-ups mostly with Finance specialty B-Schools.

So besides the curriculum make over, we need a complete overhaul of mentality of corporate too.

India needs its own model of management education

In India, recent past, many initiatives are taken by the Government and most recently demonetization which would bring forth many opportunities and challenges in the coming days. Indian B-schools should adequately modify the existing curriculum to incorporate such areas.

Gaining a global perspective: Identifying, analysing and practicing how best to manage when faced with economic, institutional and cultural differences across the countries.

Developing leadership skills: Understanding the responsibilities of leadership, developing alternative approaches to inspiring, influencing and guiding others; learning such skills as conducting a performance review and giving critical feedback; and recognizing the impact of one's actions and behaviours on others.

Honing integration skills: Thinking about issues from diverse, shifting angles to frame problems holistically; learning to make decisions based on multiples, often conflicting, functional perspectives; and building judgment and intuition into messy, unstructured situations.

Recognizing organizational realities and implementing effectively: Influencing others and getting things done in the context of hidden agenda, unwritten rules, political coalitions, and competing points of views.

Acting creatively and innovatively: Finding and framing problems; collecting, synthesizing and distilling large volumes of ambiguous data: engaging in generative and lateral thinking; and constantly experimenting and learning.

Thinking critically and communicating clearly: Developing and articulating logical, coherent, and persuasive arguments; marshalling supportive evidences,; and distinguishing facts from opinion

Understanding the role, responsibilities and purpose of business: Balancing financial and non-financial objectives while simultaneously juggling the demands of diverse constituencies such as shareholders, employees, customers, regulators and society

Understanding the limits of models and markets: Asking tough questions about risk by questioning underlying assumptions and emerging patterns; seeking to understand what might go wrong; learning about the sources of errors that lead to flawed decision making and the organizational safeguards that reduce their occurrence; and understanding the tension between regulatory activities aimed at preventing social harm and market-based incentives designed to encourage innovation and efficiency.

Critical Quality factors in Management Education

Majority of the management institutes are lacking in creating a good human capital to match the corporate needs. The governing bodies at various management institutes and faculty members must understand that it is very vital to adopt strategies to deliver value:

- Content, Competence and Delivery
- Reliability, Flexibility and Competency Development
- Institute Industry Interface and Career Prospects/ Employability
- Institute arranges for campus placement /short term on the job training/co-curricular and extra-curricular activities
- Institute has a visually appealing environment, sufficient/modern equipment's and support services like library, computer lab, career counseling etc.
- Institute have experienced faculty who have theoretical knowledge/practical knowledge/presentation skills and adequate qualification
- Institute delivers promised service on time
- Institute has sufficient academic staff and support staff
- There is academic value addition and employability improves after completion of the course
- Practical experience, expertise and exposure gained is significant and knowledge/skills learned are applicable to other fields
- The instructional processes are geared to develop reflective thinking and practice both individually and in groups
- The learning experiences are followed by feedback, reflection and follow-up
- Course/syllabus instills entrepreneurial spirit among students
- Institute facilitates students to work on industrial projects/research
- Institute has the ability to handle complaints and solve problems of students
- The institution undertakes curriculum revision on a regular basis
- Institute invites industry experts to deliver lectures and provides industrial exposure on

Draw attention to following attributes

Condition of B-schools:

Citing figures: 49 per cent schools have less than 60 students while 31 per cent business schools teachers are "untrained," and only 28 per cent b-school teachers are able to avail annual in-service training like FDPs.

Training B-school teachers

More than the college and university teachers, it is the B-school teachers who face a crisis of identity, they said suggesting that they needed to be provided with "freshly thought training capsules" for updation of their knowledge base and teaching skills for Business students.

Our Indian Higher education body draws attention to following things:

1. Education is not the political agenda, it is the national agenda. Education Ministry do not do politics with education.
2. Highlighting the priority of his government that the education system would be improved in a mission mode. The goal of the government is development and education for all
3. According to a national education survey, some states prime areas where teachers cannot even speak and spell properly. The government is taking an initiative towards resolving this and motivating teachers by conducting teacher training programs
4. There should be uniformity among languages in India. Education Ministry should focus on the three-language formula mentioned in the constitution for imparting education which ought to be followed by everyone
5. People should understand the value and purpose of education which is acceptance, tolerance and empathy
6. The appointment of teachers in various university and said meetings would be held soon to look into the matter
7. Speaking on the State board exams, 95 % to 99% of the students appeared for the same exam. When some states asked about the reduction in the number of the chapters allotted for the exam, education is not just about mugging up the content, but about the knowledge and values ingrained from the content
8. As compared to all states, the girls in some states are doing much better in education
9. Ground level implementation should be carried out soon for a credit based system
10. In order to improve the mental ability of students, yoga should be made mandatory in schools
11. Almost every student is becoming an engineer. However, humanities must also be encouraged as one should know India's culture and traditions. IITs/IIMs/IISc and other higher education institutions must include humanities as a part of their curriculum.

10 steps to improve education quality and student achievement with outcome based education

1. Mission, Vision & Objectives

The central feature of OBE software is to prepare the mapping of the mission, vision and values set by the institute with the program educational objectives (PEOs).

2. Program Educational Objectives (PEO)

In terms of student achievement, PEOs are assessed for longer duration when graduates are envisaged to achieve in their career 4-5 years after graduation. PEO attainment is based on stakeholder inputs using online survey questionnaire, which will reveal that graduates are broadly satisfied with their achievement in all PEOs.

3. Graduate Attributes (GA)

Graduate attributes are often known as key skills, generic attributes, transferable, employability and/or soft skills. Mapping and implementing of graduate attributes to the curriculum design to achieve the desired learning outcomes is tracked in real time and visibility improved to students and staff through generation of curriculum mind mapping tools.

4. Student learning outcomes (SLO)

A learning outcome is what a student can do as a result of a learning experience. It describes the attributes of their ideal graduates based on their visions and missions as part of their institutional goals or outcomes, and using these as bases for developing specific program outcomes. The three broad types of learning outcomes are disciplinary knowledge and skills, generic skills and, attitudes and values.

5. Program outcomes (PO)

Program outcomes are the sets of competencies (related knowledge, skills, and attitudes) that all learners are expected to demonstrate. These desired outcomes are mapped to the expected learning outcomes in specific courses. The desired course and learning outcomes are attained through assessment and evaluation tools.

6. Course outcomes (CO)

Course outcomes refer to the knowledge, values, and skills all learners are expected to demonstrate at the end of a course. Learning outcomes are mapped to course outcomes and program outcomes.

7. Syllabus, Unit & Lesson Plan Outcomes

Course outcomes lead to lesson outcomes. Create syllabus, unit and lesson plan to link with the learning outcomes of each teaching activity that aids coherence and cohesion in student learning.

8. Teaching Methods

Technology-enabled performance demonstration of pedagogical learning through video lectures, podcasts, and slide presentations would innovate and enhance students learning experience. Technology-aided teaching methods and assessments would enable education institutions to accurately and perfectly map with the targeted outcome. This enables students and faculty to work together as partners toward achieving a visible and clear goal.

9. Assessment & Evaluation Tools

Implementing OBE further translates to the quality and orientation of the faculty members. The core mission of teaching is to build the learning competencies through online tests, assignments, quizzes and puzzles, and evaluation of courses/faculty through survey questionnaire for attainment of PEOs.

10. Customizable Rubrics & Marking Schemes

Assessment of writing, oral communication, critical thinking, or information literacy often requires rubrics. Automated rubrics are standardized scoring guides that assist evaluators to make assessment more transparent, easy, consistent, and objective and determine the quality of student work in a consistent manner.

B-Schools are taking an intensive industry-driven approach to education. Trends that are calling the shots

In world full of successful entrepreneurs who didn't learn management at business school, it might seem odd to suggest that management education makes you a better entrepreneur. In fact, there are people who might even say that there is no correlation between formal education and successful entrepreneurship, but a formal education gives you an opportunity to broaden your horizons like nothing else.

Formal grooming an education in management grooms you for a career in business and an entrepreneur needs this more than anyone else. It gives you the ability and confidence to take part in business discussions and come up with out-of-the-box solutions; precisely what an entrepreneur needs. In institutions where start-up schools are part of the university, a student can experiment with entrepreneurial ideas, execute them and take them forward with support from the institution.

Holistic problem-solving Strategic thinking is vital for entrepreneurs as it enables them to respond to market forces and competitors. An MBA trains you for cost-benefit analysis and strategic planning for problems and opportunities. Good risk management is also something that entrepreneurs in the making can learn at management schools.

Case studies and group projects At management schools, you deal with case studies. It's a way of encouraging an entrepreneur to think strategically and hone his problem solving abilities. You also participate in group projects, presentations and assignments that require you to showcase your leadership abilities. These give an entrepreneur skills to handle real-life business challenges.

Communication and interpersonal skills An entrepreneur needs to put across his ideas clearly and precisely, something that is an important part of management training, as are interpersonal skills. Good interpersonal skill can work wonders for an entrepreneur when it comes to dealing with colleagues and clients.

Meeting deadlines in business, there are deadlines and unless one has been trained to make the best use of the time available, this can become a stumbling block for an entrepreneur. This is something that is taught well at all management schools.

Networking To be an entrepreneur, one needs not only right kind of tools and training but right network of people. Formal education, especially at universities, has the potential of helping students forge strong relationships, both academic as well as geographic.

A good management education therefore provides all these skills and competencies in a short span of time to those aiming to become successful entrepreneurs. A rigorous education helps prepare students for challenges in life. Whatever one learns at a B-school doesn't stand in the way of becoming a successful entrepreneur; it only helps.

Unfortunately the Education segment misinterprets "Competency" with ability to acquire qualifications and the numbers of years spent in Academics rather than testing the application of the knowledge so acquired and how relevant it is in today's scenario.

Do today's management teachers of so called "B-schools" interested to know and teach what is Digital Marketing, Big Data, Hadoop, Internet of Things, Financial Modelling , Business Impact Analysis etc and how these will impact our lives in the years to come?

We are stuck with teaching outdated syllabus and that's of no significance today. While agreeing with you that a faculty saddled with administrative responsibilities won't be able to do justice to his teaching, I submit that depending on the capability of the faculty nothing wrong with some administrative work. Because small B-Schools can't afford to have too many people to shoulder all those responsibilities. But care should be taken not to disturb the Faculty's teaching delivery. Faculty should be encouraged to go for industry study, if required by granting paid leave, so that they bring that experience to the class. Investing in faculty development helps in adding value to the students overall development and thereby to the school.

India can learn from Finland's phenomenon-based learning system

Finland has made a revolutionary change in its education system through its newly-introduced curriculum reform. In its National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2016, Finland has emphasised the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach to education and introduced the concept of phenomenon-based learning that aims at eliminating school subjects from the curriculum. Phenomenon-based learning is letting go of the segregated subject-based approach and understanding a phenomenon, such as global warming, through different approaches, such as scientific, mathematical, historical, etc.

The concept of phenomenon-based learning was introduced to keep students engaged and involved in their studies by establishing a collaborative approach, where they are made to work in small groups. This way, they are able to solve problems in a constructive manner and improve their communication skills. Phenomenon-based teaching provides a multidisciplinary approach to education, where broader topics and concepts such as the European Union, technology, community, etc are discussed in a holistic manner.

This method accelerates the pace of learning and elevates it to a higher level providing multiple points of view for a particular concept. As a result, the observations made are not restricted to a single subject, which allows students to study holistically with different perspectives for a topic. This results in crossing the boundaries between subjects naturally and integrating different subjects and themes in a single class.

This new-age learning was introduced in all schools in Finland for students aged between 7 and 16 years incorporating at least a period for interdisciplinary learning in their programme. Finland has been implementing effective education reforms since the 1970s and their students have always stood apart from their peers on international assessments.

Conclusion

In India, the Government is taking many initiatives most recently demonetization which would bring forth many opportunities and challenges in the coming days. Indian B-schools should adequately modify the existing curriculum. Not only have the government initiatives to strengthen the quality of higher education and b-schools, but private autonomous institutions also taken initiatives to develop industry need based curriculum which delivers the quality of output. Indian higher education institutions should follow the developed economies educational systems like European region education development system with the help of Government higher education bodies. The changes and challenges in higher education in the 21st century where internet and digital technologies are reshaping the way we think and live. Our daily lives are intertwined with digital technologies like social media, smart-phone, tablets and e-commerce just to name a few. Technology is no more a luxury that is reserved for the elites but rather is affordable and has become a necessity and extended arm for the common man. So the Government should take initiative through sponsored funded business research projects, effective utilization of technology in learning, assessing the learning outcome to build competency and to develop employability skills among the higher education Students.

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