

PARTICIPATION OF TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS IN MANAGING SELF - FINANCING ENGINEERING INSTITUTES

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1.0 RECENT CONTROVERSEY :

Supreme Court's ruling on capitation fee by professional colleges has created unprecedented problems for the State Governments, students and the management of self financing institutions of higher learning. In most of the newspaper articles, National and State seminars, the focus is on financial management of such self - financing institutes. In my opinion, the state educational authorities and the management of the self - financing institutes have missed a singular most important message of the Supreme Court's ruling. The message is this : SFI have indeed a role to play in meeting the educational needs of society. They have the right to charge its price for their service to the consumers. But they have no right to exploit the consumers by charging indiscriminately higher price and providing low quality services. They must run their enterprise commercially but by using ethical means, which all commercial and business organisations are required to do under the Consumer's Protection Act. Who knows, in future under the pressure of the students, parents and industries, these SFI may also be brought under the Consumers Protection Act.

The management of SFI of higher learning will be facing bigger challenges on academic front rather than on the financial front; even more than the management of Government & Government subsidised educational institutes.

In my association with some of the staff development programmes organised by such SFI, from discussions with Principals of such institutions concerned with quality of teaching and from contacts with senior members of the management during the hectic days of admissions to their engineering courses, I had an uneasy feeling that the corporate management was more concerned with getting finance rather than managing it for academic well being of institute. Some Principals were not even aware of the need to make long range financial plans for such development. Efforts for staff development are only sporadic and only when external funding is available. Focus is also on employing more part - time, retired staff who have no permanent interest in the well-being of the institute. Even efforts by University authorities and the AICTE to maintain quality of staff and another infrastructure are getting diluted through the intervention of politicians at the Govt. level. It is very doubtful whether, these institutions have professionalised financial accounting to ensure that activities like research, teaching and extension services are properly maintained in it's quality.

2.0 THE NATURE OF FUTURE PROBLEMS OF SFI's :

In the present market oriented economy, every business organisation is required to be conscious of the consumer's needs; which in the case of SFI, as in any other educational institutions, is the need of

industrial and social organisations for researchers and professionals and the need of students for quality education. To provide quality services to these consumers, the management of SFI will have to introduce professionalism in their management to ensure both effectiveness and efficiency in their functioning.

To be more explicit :

- The corporate manager will have to:-
a) introduce futuristic planning to meet the changing needs of the country such as : researchers in new fields ; intensifying research in the existing fields; starting new courses in emerging areas; improving the quality of both research, teaching and extension services; b) convert these plans into long medium, and short range operational plans; c) ensure planned development of resources in the entire institute and d) Plan actual implementation and evaluation at the corporate level.
- The principal of the SFI will be, of course, instrumental in helping the corporate managers in making the above mentioned futuristic plans. But he will chiefly be concerned with implementing the academic programmes through the co - ordination of the work of departmental heads and give feedback to the management on the efficiency and effectiveness of these programmes.

The departmental heads and the teachers will ensure better quality of reearch activity and its product and student's learning.

Even though, the need to be professional at all levels of hierarchy in the educational institutes are simply stated in the foregoing statements, the actual task is far too complex in the field of education. The analogy of SFIs with other commercial organisations stops at this stage. The reason is that academic processes like research, learning, teaching etc. are not yet subject to rational study and thinking as are

manufacturing, financial and marketing processes in the economic development enterprise. All actors in the educational set up are even today firm in their belief that one can learn teaching, research and educational planning and management on the job through practical experience and there is no need for special professional devleopment effort.

3.0 IMPLICATIONS OF PROFESSIONALISATION OF EDUCATIONAL ACTORS IN SFI :

A person is said to be a professional in his field, when he is equipped with basic scientific knowledge to understand the principles behind his actual field operations and practices. He is a person who not only is capable of discharging his functions more intelligently, effectively and efficiently, but most importantly can readily adapt to changing environmental context : changing needs of the customer, changing nature of technology, changing nature of resource and change in organisational structure. Institutions of higher learning including Universities are known for their resistance to changes proposed in educational objectives, teaching, research and educational management. The reason is not that the academic and educational managers are by nature resistant. The main contributory factor to this resistance is the lack of understanding of the scientific principles which govern the efficiency and effectiveness of student's learning, teachers teaching, heads of the department curriculum managements and principal's institutional academic planning.

To be a good learner and researcher, one needs, on the part of the students and new entrant in a teaching profession, the knowledge of theories of learning and developmental psychology, theory of knowledge, research methodology and continued learning skills.

To be a good tearner, one needs thorough acquaintance of additional

subjects like educational technology, as well as continued learning skills.

For performing the functions of a departmental head, he needs study of curriculum improvement and various educational research methodologies and systems approach to academic problems.

For the effectiveness of the Principal, one should have education and training in macro-level educational planning and management and also training in educational research methodologies and again systems approach to academic problems.

For the corporate management, the manager should have insights into corporate educational planning.

There is one more point to be noted which, in my opinion, is crucial for the organisation struggling to cope with changes in the environment as well as within the organisational process of learning, teaching, curriculum co-ordination and educational planning. And that is : all these actors at various levels must know the principles and methodology of bringing about systems change in the planned way. This means that, at all levels, the academicians and administrators must study the subject called "Management for change" and "Technique of action research". Moreover, any educational organisation acts as an integrated system in which change in one place or functions needs corresponding change in the function of others working in different places. For example, even a simple plan to introduce audio-visual aids in the class-room teaching needs changes in the activities of the student, teaching process of a teacher, curriculum co-ordination activities of the departmental head and institutional academic planning by the principal and inclusion of this scheme at the corporate policy-making level. More than the planning of change, intensive collaborative effort is needed by all during the implementation of

change. It involves continuous learning on the job through action research in all stages of implementing change. It involves vicarious learning, simulation learning, prototype learning and full scale field experimentation learning by all simultaneously. This learning is not a simple learning of subject matter. It involves, in addition, examining one's own cultural context, i. e. system of beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and values about academic functions in the first instance and then learning new knowledge, skills and attitudes and values about academic functions in the first instance and then learning new knowledge, skills and attitudes to adopt new ways of behaviours - intellectual, motor, interpersonal and effective.

With the globalisation of Indian economy and the consequent increase in competition from the foreign industries and business organisations, there is bound to be a pressure from industries, government and the public to supply better knowledge, better trained manpower to the nation by the institutions of higher learning. The challenges to be faced by the SFI will even be greater if they are permitted to run their organisations on the commercial pattern.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT FROM THE WORLD BANK ASSISTED PROJECT ON STRENGTHENING OF POLYTECHNIC EDUCATION :

SFIs need not go out very far in search of experiments being made in qualitative and quantitative expansion and improvement of education. The necessary information about the complexity of problem can be seen first hand in Maharashtra itself, where the World Bank assisted project for polytechnic education is being implemented. The Ministry of Education, State Board officials, Principals, Head of Departments, and teachers of the polytechnic are all simultaneously involved in the planning and implementing schemes.

All of them are for the first time getting gradually convinced about the need to be professionally equipped for quality education, as they muddle through this project.

CONCLUSION :

The Supreme Court's ruling has opened up pandora's box of problems before the self-financing institutes. There are efforts by SFIs at present to solve their problems more through political means. But this will always be a short term measure. In the long term, there is no short cut to first professionalising all actors in the

educational enterprise and ensuring participation of all in improving the quality of educational services, which the consumer, forced to pay a high price for such services, will demand in return.

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