

2. TECHNICAL EDUCATION : THE GROUND REALITIES

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INTRODUCTION

"Quality Education", is the need of the hour as far as globalization is concerned. Many educationists speak volumes on this topic and shower various ideas, out of which many need attention and the rest need activation. The globalization scenario widens the opportunities, attracting the youth in general and educated youth in particular. However, to meet the global requirements, sufficient knowledge base and adequate exposure to the practical fields are very much essential. The present education system, by and large, lacks inquisitiveness and insight into what is really required. Many institutions have become factories of producing large number of graduates and play a vital role in promoting unemployment. This is the right time to redefine the needs and necessities of the generation in the light of globalization, liberalization and privatization.

THE FACTS & NEEDS :

People call it brain storm activity, referring to the establishment of foreign universities in India. In this process the standards of Indian education system need to be modified, to be in the race. The premier institutes of higher education in the country are well ahead of many such other institutes. The IITs, IISc, NITs and central universities are much ahead of many like-institutes in the present situation. Nevertheless, a serious emphasis is needed with respect to other institutes and universities.

'Improving standards' is not a simple task

as it is said. It is a long lasting process to be carried continually and consistently. Standards of every activity in the teaching-learning process need to be redefined to suit to the changing scenario. This task is to be taken up by both government and private organizations. Educational consultants and educational technology cells may take active part in this process. Experts in every field and branch of general and technical education are to be identified and a pool of such experts may be setup to impart training to the faculty. Institutes should depute the faculty for these training programmes periodically. The training may be like refresher courses to senior faculty, orientation courses to younger and fresher faculty. The faculty members also should feel the necessity of updating their knowledge. One should invite the new challenges coming in the way and face them with positive attitude, instead of feeling guilty for attending the training programmes, as a teacher is a life long student. Without knowing recent trends in the field, a teacher cannot inspire students to a greater extent. It is, then, better untaught than ill taught.

Quality of education also depends on the curriculum prescribed for a specific course. The contents of the curriculum need to have continuity with respect to the contents of the previous course. It would be properly justifiable to have a sequential and progressive curriculum in every subject of every branch of study. This creates natural interest among the students in the subject. Wide range of resources are available at the moment, to the learning

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community. 'Which is actually needed to whom', is the talk of the day at the moment. Hence every student tries to get an exposure to what is required, for reaching the goal.

Again, to meet the global needs, the course contents of the graduation are to be well matched with the requirements. The institute needs to update the curriculum very often and make the students aware of what is 'in and around' of the subject. To frame or update the course contents, the institute should have autonomy. Autonomy enables the institute to set a prescribed syllabus for a specific course. Many institutes may not like to have autonomy as such, for it needs strong financial support in the beginning to set up a new system that can take care of the requirements of autonomy.

There is a misnomer being spread these days that teaching is a profession while learning is an obligation. Eventually this trend is gaining momentum among the younger teaching community. Persons with less acumen towards teaching are entering the teaching profession, by virtue of which the noble profession gets diluted in morals. Unlike many other professions, a teacher influences the society to a greater extent. The good and bad of a teacher directly plays a dominant role on the establishment of the student's individual personality. A good teacher carves a student into a better citizen while a bad one spoils the society. Thus, the continuous learning process makes all the difference, and improves the quality of education. Before igniting the younger minds, the teacher should have an ignited mind. Inspiration from ignited minds goes a long way through later generations.

There has been a live trend of recruiting retired faculty in private engineering colleges, claiming that this may improve the quality of education. This very concept is quite excellent provided the faculty is from nationally reputed institutes rather than polytechnics. A knowledgeable teacher better inspires the students and leads them in a brighter path for a better future. Another

measure to be taken up in private engineering colleges is that every teacher should teach only in English, the global language, which makes the students to improve their proficiency in English. This is the need of the hour for many students fail in communicating through English. Many recruiting agencies whisper at their inability of recruiting vibrant and talented youth to meet their requirement. The debt in this area leaves a void in the present system of technical education, which in turn affects the final outcome of the system, i.e., the graduate student.

Engineering education, on the other side, is fundamentally different from formal education. Professional development is the basic difference between these two. Application of scientific principles to prototypes and manufacturing processes need to be largely emphasized in engineering education. Technical education, at the moment by and large, is becoming a dying destitute in the hands of unskilled and distressed faculty as well as management. The education-morality has gone to ashes these days. The moral obligation of imparting quality education is on the funeral trial, awaiting the sacred murder. However, private institutions like BITS, VIT have secured the 'second to none' status. The credit goes to the vision of the mentors of those institutions. Only visionary people can foresee the future consequences and nurture the institutes to meet the global requirements, and institutions like PSG, College of Technology, Coimbatore; Shri Vishnu Engineering College for Women, Bhimavaram etc. have become more popular in a short span of time; thanks to their mentors. Committed faculty and dedicated management are the two eyes of technical education in private engineering colleges. Without fulfilling requirements, the institution cannot flourish even loaded with lusty colours. The faculty can work to the need, provided freedom-to-work is maintained. Peaceful working atmosphere is to be cultivated in every engineering college, which in turn encourages the faculty to strive more for the benefit of the students as well as the institute.

Another practical problem being experienced by the industry is lack of skilled technical manpower. There are more than five lakh engineering graduates coming out every year while, however, only around fifty thousand polytechnic diploma holders enter the fray. That is, supervisors of work are more than the real workers. The craze over technical education at graduate level almost kills the 10+3 licenciate engineering education. A graduate engineer is supposed to supervise the work of diploma engineers; conversely diploma engineers are less abundant than graduate engineers at the moment. The industry expects more productivity from the skilled manpower, which on the other hand is partially promising. In fact, the diploma engineers are not aware of the state of art technology at their level. In many polytechnics the students hardly have hands on experience; instead, they learn the theory through drawings and models in the class rooms. Real practical exposure is not available in many colleges which makes the students unskilfull. Industries need skilled manpower which is less available, as such vacancies get unfilled. In a recent survey it has been observed that atleast two lakh skilled people are required by the industry sector while more than four lakh graduate and diploma engineers are unrest. That is, qualified people are available in tune with the opportunities, yet there is a paucity of skilled manpower. More attention is to be paid in this direction.

At the moment, software industry is attracting strongly the educated youth with lucrative earnings. This tendency leads to a situation where core industries are at a great discount, which definitely reduces their productivity, a unwelcomed situation. Only time can show way out for this real problem.

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the statutory body for technical education in India, has suggested to obtain feedback from the outgoing students on the overall performance and facilities of the institution, which helps in restructuring the modalities for better performance in the future. This is a good insight that every institution needs to consider.

CONCLUSION

The aim of any education system is to produce quality-impregnated youth that can improve the living standards of the society. When quality is mixed with purpose, the education in general and technical education in particular categorically fulfills the societal needs. 'Degree with dignity' enlivens the image of real education. The foregoing facts and needs are to be realized and properly nurtured for improving the existing standards of technical education.

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