

PRIVATIZATION OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION IS GOOD - BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH

* **B. M. Naik**

SYNOPSIS :

The paper presents in brief, the desirable and not so desirable aspects of the unaided engineering education institutes in India. An analysis of the performance of these institutes is made and presented along with suggestions so as to make most of them.

Privatization is a global phenomenon. It facilitates more productive utilization of national resources, and hence is the trend, world over. In technical education its success, however, depends on the condition that it is accompanied by professionalism and without which, it may prove damaging. The paper advocates introduction of professionalism and adherence to academic norms and standards in the management of education.

Every change is essentially accompanied by turmoil. The transition from Governmentalization to privatization in technical education can not be an exception. The paper identifies the factors which need to be controlled so as to make privatization successful. Introduction of "Accreditation" forthwith, without any loss of time, is the crying need of the hour.

The attitude and role of AICTE, University, State Directorate has not to remain the same as before but to change in the response to world wide phenomenon of privatization. The role has to be of regulatory, co-operative and developmental in nature instead of controlling. Establishing separate Universities for them, so as to shape these institutes in a better way, is strongly advocated.

In today's context, when export is the order the day, the technical education institutes have to think going global. The question which immediately comes to our mind is of global competitiveness of Indian Institutes. They have themselves to become competitive by world standards and pave the way for industry. Our institutes have to think to export technical education, which is both a cultural exchange, besides, business strategy. The unaided institutions with innovative entrepreneurship may respond favourably.

The dynamic environment of India and the world calls for a rethinking among the key people in technical education, as to how they can develop and reshape themselves to explore more and better opportunities globally for themselves and also for the countrymen. With this in view, the article examines the role and the response of unaided engineering colleges in the country.

1.0 TOO LOW INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION BY GOVT. HAS FAILED THE NATION.

Peoples' demand on technical education in terms of quality and quantity, in India, is grossly unmet. Priority allocated by a family in its home budget for education in general, and technical in particular, is much high, higher than for building a house, buying a refrigerator, T.V. etc. People of low income group are seen spending their lifetime saving on technical education of their children.

This priority is, however, not reflected in Governments National / State budget. During first five year plan we were spending 7.86 % of GNP on education. Till sixth five year plan, it consistently came down to 2.7 % of GNP, although now again picked up to 3.55 %.

Public investment on education in India, is one of the lowest. It is therefore no wonder if per capita income is also one of the lowest, (U. S. \$ 360). The nation has failed on account of this and all the problems like poverty, unemployment, communalism, blind faith, population growth etc. have assumed high proportion.

Vast majority of education spending in all the nation is Govt. financed and they devote far fewer private resources to education. For example, in U. S., 7.4 % of GNP (1977) is allocated to education, out of which 6.3 % of GNP in public spending and only 1.1 % of GNP is private.

The education commission 1964 - 66, and New Education Policy 1986 recommended public investment of 6% of GNP but it has not been cared for by planners. Asian tiger countries Taiwan, Hongkong, Malaysia have been spending on education as high as 11 % of GNP and they attribute credit for their progress to this strategy of high investment on education. The world average investment on education is 5.6 % of GNP (1978) almost two times more than investment in India.

It is this deficiency in education budget on the part of Govt., which has led to spur in privatization and followed by commercialization of education, first for nursery then primary, secondary and now for higher education.

Now the Supreme Court in its recent judgement has declared that, right to education is a fundamental right, even in the sphere of Higher Education; and laid down the principle that, "admission should be on merit, rather than capacity to afford".

The underlying principle being that of equal opportunity to all; which is followed in all developed and developing countries. If education opportunities are unequally distributed, because of inequalities in the distribution of income, and hence the capacity of individuals to finance investment in education, then this will perpetuate inequalities of income in future, since earning power is related to workers education.

Privatization has a inherent tendency to bypass legal and constitutional social provisions like reservations, and equity. This would have to be guarded through a deliberate, conscious effort, and avoided. They should not become a cause of segregation of society but bring about intergration, which is restored by supreme court decision by prescribing 50 % free seats and 50 % paying seats in unaided college.

1.1 PRIVATIZATION SHOULD NOT RESULT IN TO COMMERCIALIZATION :

Privatization in education is not new to this country. Schools and colleges were started by Tilak, Maharshi Karve, Madan Mohan Malviya, Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil. But what is new is commercialization of education, and profit making (unofficial).

The education entrepreneurs of today are not motivated by philanthropic considerations like in past, but by motives of name, fame and profit. In U. S. A. and

other countries they have resorted to only mild privatization and not total, like ours collecting 100% cost from students. Resources are mobilised for the cause of education besides fees from students (50%) from private sources, namely the industry, (20%) and 19% from Government, 11% from donations. The tuition fees have gone up substantially, but yet they do not meet up the full cost of education. Universities and schools undertake research projects from industry on payment, to provide financial support to technical education. Ram Murthi Commission (1990) has also recommended differential fee system, and said that only 75% of cost of education to be collected from students.

This is a new world, according to W. W. Rostow, full of opportunities in hi-tech, to earn, for those who have its knowledge and skills. Realising this, people are rushing to learn new technology. Education is being viewed not as a social service but an economic activity. Government institutions, inherently, are slow to respond to peoples needs and hence privatization.

1.2 FORMS OF PRIVATIZATION :

Privatization assumes various forms :

- a) When the institute is founded ,managed and maintained by Govt., it is zero privatization.
- b) When aided by government, (100 %) managed and maintained by a society appointed by Government, it is mild privatization.
- c) When aided by Government up to 90 %, managed and maintained by private society, it is termed intensive privatization.
- d) when unaided by Government, managed and maintained by private society, it is termed as total privatization.

All form of organisations are obliged to comply with the statutory provisions.

There is a world wide revolution in thinking, perception, and vision in technical education. New forms of innovative organisations to capture market opportunities in education are taking birth. Equality in opportunity to the most down and out people is also being kept in view, in all countries, especially in developing. Provision of scholarship and loans to poor and deserving students are on increasing scale. Japan is reported to be giving more loans (refundable), while European countries give scholarship (non refundable). We in India give both, loans and scholarship, but the quantum is too small, in particular that of loans.

1.3 PROFESSIONALISM AND ACCREDITATION IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR :

More importantly, the professionalism and Accreditation in education, teaching, researching is becoming the order of the day. Innovations in curricula, teaching methods, transfer of technology, are gaining value to make learning most effective, purposeful and yet reducing the cost, time and effort. This demands professionalisam on the part of teachers, and management in colleges, otherwise they would get reduced to commercial teaching shops, teaching old, outdated and irrelevant things.

The paper lays stress on these two aspects namely

- i) professionalism ; adherence to norms and standards prepared by AICTE and university for colleges and
- ii) their accreditation by independant body, evaluating their rating and worth for performing the legitimate responsibilities. Establishment of accreditation board by AICTE, is in process. It is this aspect which is vitally linked to success of privatization. In the absence of accreditation, it is not possible to make distinction in the standard of education of various colleges. Neither

the management nor the students know where they are, and where they tend to go.

2.0 THE BALANCE SHEET :

The balance sheet of unaided private engineering colleges and polytechnics is presented below.

3.0 UNDESIRABLE ASPECTS :

- 3.1 Some institutes are reported to be financially exploiting the students, parents and the society (unofficially); Now, with the decision of supreme court, it is hoped that it will be curbed.
- 3.2 Many institutions do not provide proper education, due to lack of laboratory facilities, trained teachers, and lab. staff.
- 3.3 Some institutes do not pay wages properly to the employees.
- 3.4 The discipline in colleges, law and order in cities or towns where the institutes are located has deteriorated, because of influx of bad students from outside state, and lack of management capability to cope with.
- 3.5 The discipline in universities is adversely affected.
- 3.6 Some managements are unofficially siphoning out money for selfish and election purposes. This is being curbed now.
- 3.7 These colleges are a cause of segregation of students, rich and poor, which according to a proven theory perpetuates the gap, and so it is a constitutional objection.
- 3.8 The management is found lacking vision and professionalism.
- 3.9 Intentions of some managements are doubtful.
- 3.10 Some are exploiting the weakness of Government.
- 3.11 Due to lack of professionalism it is observed that colleges are deficient in teaching staff, laboratory equipment

and other facilities are still affiliated to university. Teachers from such institutes now dominate the board of studies, and other academic activities in University. Rules of passing have been made easy, term work marks are given much more, than they deserve, as a result a student who just passes in theory gets first class. Question papers set in examination are easy, and full of mistakes. Norms and standards prescribed for higher education are not followed. The number of lectures delivered actually are only half of prescribed. Professional approach is expected to control all above and turn out competent engineers.

4.0 DESIRABLE ASPECTS :

- 4.1 They are meeting the peoples demand on technical education , at least of those who can afford.
- 4.2 Some colleges / polytechnics which are located in rural areas, have taken Hi-Tech to rural area for which they deserve to be complemented and rewarded.
- 4.3 In rural areas, they have set up colleges where Government would not have set up even technical schools. Their contribution in rural development is note worthy.
- 4.4 They have been producing engineers and meeting skill shortages of industry.
- 4.5 Many jobs are generated in these colleges on sustained basis for example lectures, lab-assistants, clerks, peons, and on temporary basis like in construction of buildings, manufacture furniture, equipment etc.
- 4.6 The development of colleges have been very fast as compared to similar institutes in Government.
- 4.7 These colleges have created a base for technology development and are useful in closing the technology gap.

4.8 Many managements have certainly shown an enterprising spirit.

They are highly motivated for giving service to society.

4.9 Lot of financial resources have been mobilised within the state for the cause of education. So also substantial capital has come from outside state.

The institutes are a social asset under society act, and not a personal property. Society has therefore become richer.

5.0 SUGGESTIONS :

5.1 Appoint a University nominee on the management of each college. Funds collected ought to be used only for institute. This should be ensured.

5.2 Government should take a lead in training teachers. The present standard of education is very poor, for want of trained teachers. The state is a beneficiary of the graduates coming out from such institutes, and hence it must assume at least the responsibility of training teachers.

5.3 Start post graduate, Ph.D. programmes in Government/aided colleges, in vacations where teachers from private colleges can continue further study. Developing high level technical manpower is the crying need of these colleges. Without this, quality of education will deteriorate.

5.4 Government should establish technical Universities forthwith, one in each of the four regions to properly regulate admission teaching, exam. etc. One of the existing Government colleges could be elevated to university status for quickness in shaping the private colleges.

5.5 Antecedents of the students coming from outside state should be duly verified, so that they do not create trouble for colleges and cities. The colleges should attempt to attract only *Scholars* from other states and not *gundas*.

5.6 Government should Grant financial aid and loans to students who are financially poor. Government should provide financial grants / loan to all colleges. State gains a lot from these institutes, and so it should share the expenditure also.

5.7 The colleges should be allowed to go global to earn foreign exchange. This is a time when market boundaries are rapidly shifting and demands for globalization and innovation are becoming a rule. When India Government has taken the export drive, it should also export technical education, which more importantly provides a base for export of goods. Only quality education can be exported, and so they would have to improve the standards to international levels. It is an opportunity for Maharashtra to specialise in technical education, for which '*QUALITY*' & '*PROFESSIONALISM*' are the key words.

5.8 " Accreditation " should be introduced by Government or a statutory body forthwith, so that the students parents, and society know the rating of colleges.

5.9 Aided colleges need to be granted academic autonomy and Government colleges be converted into autonomous or deemed Universities. Government ought to make them more open through organisational model to permit them to offer flexible responses to market needs. Private colleges emulate them and hence this is necessary.

5.10 Learning from the experience of other countries in the world, it may be submitted for consideration that the technical education ought to be delinked from education Ministry and linked to Industry Ministry, without which it is difficult to make technical education and research relevant, and useful. The Agriculture universities in India have done this. They are

connected to Agriculture Ministry, and have solved the food problem. The same model would have to be repeated in technical education, to improve the performance of industry. Education and industry are the two sides of the same coin, and they need to be brought under one roof. Many nations are thinking on these lines. Shall we also not show courage to change to make education job oriented, as is eagerly desired.

6.0 INNOVATIVE PRIVATE INITIATIVE NEEDED :

The concept of privatization of education is practised in USA, and several other countries. Infact the best Universities of USA are private, for ex. M. I. T. Boston. In Maharashtra, private initiative ought to be viewed as supplementary to government effort. The number of engineers, in India, today for the huge size of country, abundant raw materials, and huge population are too few, only one tenth of what we ought to have. India can not hope to utilise the natural resources optimally and raise the standard of living of the vast masses, with so few engineers. In another five years, if India wants to catch up with the world, the number of colleges would have to again double, despite the unemployment of engineers. Engineering career will remain in higher demand in years to come. There are 2,90,000 engineering students in small country like Germany while India has only 68,000. Small country like Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan etc. have far more engineering students than India.

6.1 Technical education is very crucial to industrial competitiveness. Percentage share of Maharashtra in national industrial production is found to be consistently going down from 60 % to 40 %. This has to be a cause of concern while shaping technical education in the state.

- a) India share in world trade has gone down from 2.25 % in 1950 to 0.54 % in 1992 (news item in financial express on 12th Dec. 1992)
- b) Incremental Capital Output Ratio (ICOR) of India is very high., 6.11, highest in Asian region as against 3.33 of Malaysia, 3.37 of Korea, 4.82 of Singapore. It means we are investing more and getting less, which is due largely to shortage of technological inputs.
- c) The output per employee in Indian industry is very low \$ 1277, as against \$20,016 in Singapore and \$ 67,246 in Japan.

Building of a nation needs not only more engineers, but engineers with excellence and innovative ability. There is a whole renovation taking place in the world and we ought to have a look at that while making the decision. COMETT, technology parks, Entrepreneurship centres, Incubators, University Enterprise Training Partnership etc. are developed and attached to almost every higher education institute elsewhere in the world. It is this development which has propelled the industry and economy of those nations. Our institutes would have to do that for which private initiative may be effective.

7.0 CONCLUSION :

Debates on privatization are not limited to India. They are going on round the world, and there is a need to exchange information and experience on the subject.

Privatization of engineering education facilitates pooling of resources, ideas and energies. Hence it has to be encouraged. The institutes, however, should not reduce to teaching shops, but become centres of intellectual, technological knowledge and strength, for which in addition to teaching they must involve in R & D and thereby also mobilise resources for the cause of education.

Professionalism, internationalism in teaching, research and development is the acute need of time. Privatization based on innovative entrepreneurship, market orientation and competency by global standards ought to be promoted, so as to attract scholars from abroad.

Government ought to increase financial allocation to 10 % of GNP to education. So also the other beneficiary namely industry should take active hand in sponsoring research projects to colleges. Opportunities and facility for education, should be enlarged so that shortages are reduced, and occurrence of exploitation avoided.

Linking technical education to industry ministry, to make education and research industry oriented like agriculture education linked to agriculture ministry, is a proper step which Government should take.

Most of the unaided colleges in the country are run by politicians who sit also in Govt. It is hoped that they would show statesmanship and use the educational institutes as means to build a national unity they seek, and to develop the human resources needed by economy.

Education, especially technical, has now become key factor for economic

development. The attempt of total privatization of technical education should therefore not fail, but it must succeed. It can succeed only when professionalism covering quality control, accreditation, and adherence to academic standards and norms prepared by AICTE is followed by teachers, colleges and universities.

Technical education in India, has yet to go a long way, and yet to reach common man. It is hoped the privatization will play a responsible role to help achieve the goal.

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