Enhancing Quality of Teaching and Performance

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Introduction

The Education and Skill Development Services Sector broadly comprises of School Education, Higher Education and Industrial / Technical Training including Vocational Training. It should be noted that while in general, ' skill development'

The higher education system in our country comprises of Colleges, Universities and other institutions providing education, which leads up to
graduate degrees or beyond.

Growth of Higher Education

Growth of Higher Education Institutions
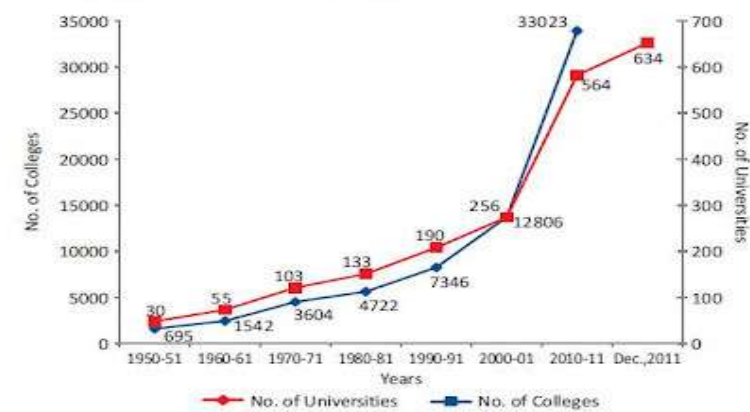
1. Massive Expansion in No. Of colleges:

India added nearly 20,000 colleges in a decade from 2000-01 to 2010-11. In 2000-01 12806 colleges were there and in 2010-11 these gone up to 33,023. Also the No. Of universities have increased from 256 to 564 in the same period.

Growth of Students Enrolment ('000') in Higher Education

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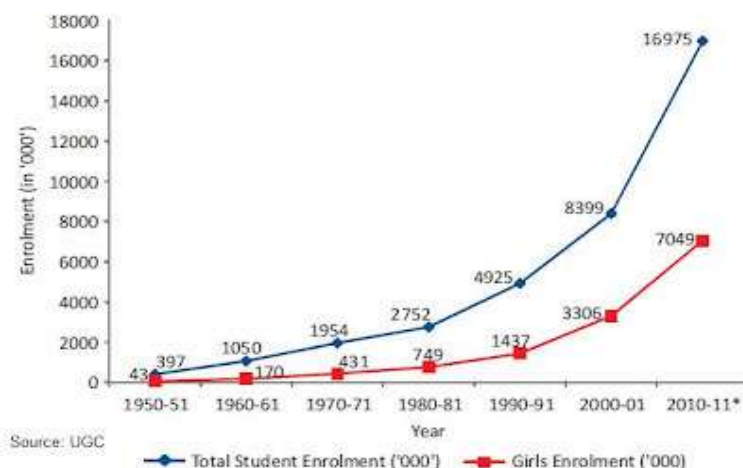
2. Lesser growth in students enrollment:

Although number of students enrolled in higher educationdoubled from 8.4 million to 17 million in the decade 2000-01 to 2010-11, it grew a slower than the number of colleges

     Students Enrolment for Higher Education in 2010-11

Faculty-wise Students Enrolment in Higher Education 2010-11*
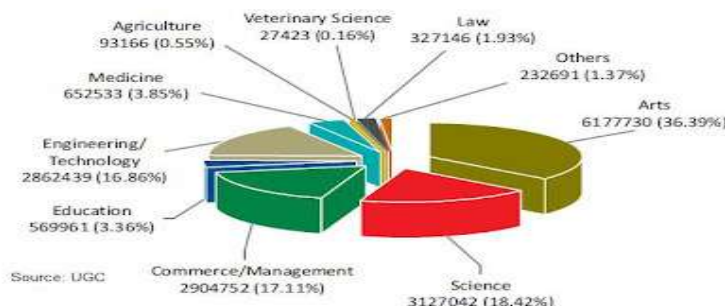
From the above figure it is clear that, maximum students have enrolled for traditional courses that are 71.92% of the total enrolment for the Higher Education.

In order to promote economics and industrial development in a country, the essential requirement is the capacity to develop skilled man power   of good quality in adequate number. According to population projections based on the 2001 Census figures, in 2011 nearly 144 million of India's Population will be between the age group 18 to 23 – the target age group for Higher Education. At the beginning of India's Independence there were 20 universities and 591 colleges while the student's enrollment was 0. 2 million. After Independence the growth rate has increased like anything. Now India has possesses highly developed higher education system. India's Higher Education System is the third highest system in the world. First No. is of China and at the second No. is of United States in the terms of enrollment. However in terms of number of institutions, India is the largest Higher Education System in the world with 33,023. institutions including 564 universities. But in spite of this fact we are not in a position to provide quality education for the following reasons.

II. Drawbacks of the Current Higher Education System in India and Suggested Improvements

The entire system is beset by a variety of problems. The problems given below, are the ones which directly or indirectly affect quality of teaching in higher education.

1.   **Exclusivity**: Even today, the gross enrolment ratio for higher education is very low indicating that higher education is not as inclusive as it could be.

2.   **Wrong Attitude**: The education system looks at students as products rather than clients. Due to this, the approach is based on quantifiable targets, like number of students graduating every year, rather than quality based parameters. Dr. D. S. Kothari Commission on Education had recommended in the year 1964 that the Government should spend at least 6% of   Gross Domestic Product on education but till today in 2012-13 also we could not reach to this target.

3.   **Lack of Accountability:** The Government agencies, institutions of
 higher education as well as the teachers are not required to show results.

4.   **Lack of Infrastructure and Equipment:** Many institutions ado not have adequate teaching infrastructure. For technical courses in engineering and medicine this makes meaningful teaching impossible.

5.   **Reality Disconnect**: Most of the syllabi and teaching methods are either outdated or at least, not grounded in the needs of the job market. So the graduates and post-graduates are not equipped with the knowledge and skills required by industry. Industry-Academia linkages are not well developed.

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6.   Lack of Quality Research: There is very little quality research in our educational institutions. Due to this very few Indian papers are cited in other research work. There is also considerable plagiarism.

7.   High Student-Teacher ratio: Due to this, students do not get the personalized attention they require. It leads to a higher drop-out rate for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

8.   Cosmetic Changes: Often, changes in the syllabi, pattern of grading and the system as a whole, are superficial, merely to prove that the system is dynamic. They may be described as, "sound and fury signifying nothing."

The authorities must encourage research among teachers and students. The Student-teacher ratio must be reduced to 30:1. If this is done, teachers can be asked to co-author research papers with students, even at the under-graduate level. With such experience at the under-graduate level, the quality of research work produced by post-graduate and doctoral students will definitely improve.

There must be accountability at every level and even senior teachers must be regularly asked to upgrade knowledge. Refresher courses must be compulsory after every five years, not just thrice in the entire career. The syllabi must be framed in consultation with industry and syllabi must not be allowed to get outdated. Any change in syllabi must be substantive. Often such changes are merely a juggling of topics between different years, which only benefits the text-book publishers. Members of Committees who suggest pointless changes, must be removed from such Committees. If changes instituted by the UGC or University authorities can be shown to be cosmetic, the authorities must be held accountable.

III. Total Quality Management and Higher Education

The concept of Total Quality Management (TQM) was developed by Dr. W. Edwards Deming and others. It aims at achieving consumer satisfaction and thus ensuring long term success and improvement in quality. In this sense one must look at long term requirement of customers (students), which is not to merely pass with good marks, but the further requirement that the education provided enables them to get appropriate employment. If a student has to work in a menial job after graduation or even post-graduation, it is not appropriate employment; since it does not compensate the student for the time and money spent on education.

Dr. W. Edwards Deming developed 14 principles of TQM.

They are discussed below with respect to higher education providers in India.

1.   Constancy of Purpose: There must be a well-defined mission statement with long-term goals. This statement goals must become a part the thinking of every employee.

2.   A Student Oriented New Philosophy: A student oriented philosophy is needed. Every employee, teacher or non-teaching staff member, must actively attempt to provide better services to the students. This includes education as well as administrative services. For example, before the recent additional examinations in our College, we opened four cash counters to accept student fees and accepted fees till 5:30 p.m. in the evening. Similarly our College now announces the dates of class tests and even dates of result declaration since the last two years for the convenience of students.

3.   Cease Dependence on Mass Inspection: In education, the focus must be on teaching rather than testing. With excellent teaching, the quality of students will obviously improve. Students must be tested to understand how much they know, rather than what they do not know.

4.   End Lowest Tender Contracts: If you pay peanuts you get monkeys. In self-financing programmes, the College may pay higher salary to an exceptional teacher, an approach which our Institution has adopted.

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5.   Improve Every Process: There must be improvements in all processes over time. Every employee must learn to think of improvements in the process of providing higher education. In our College the examiners now discuss the answer-papers to find common mistakes of students. This enables superior teaching to the next batch of students so that they may not make those mistakes.

6.   Institute Training on the Job: It is common knowledge that new teachers can be trained better if senior teachers observe their lectures and point out areas for improvement. However, new teachers should also be allowed to observe lectures of senior lecturers so that they get pointers and sometimes they may also suggest improvements. No false sense of seniority must be allowed to stand in the way.

7.   Institute Leadership: It is not only the leadership skills of the principal and departmental heads that are important, but leadership skills of everyone down to the junior most peons. The relationship with clients in education (students) is unlike that in other businesses. Students must become partners in the functioning of the Institution. This year we initiated an inter-college festival, which was handled completely by students who developed managerial and leadership skills.

8.   Drive Out Fear: Innovative teaching methods must be encouraged. Even if they prove unsuccessful the initiator must not be penalised, otherwise there will be no innovation. Students must also be encouraged to look upon the College administration as a group of individuals, rather than a monolithic entity or "the establishment."

9.   Break Down Barriers: Barriers between different categories of employees must be broken by get-togethers so that there may be better communication and less of formal procedure.

10.   Eliminate Exhortations: Rather than exhorting employees about the mission statement and goals, they must be encouraged to treat the goals as their own. Only then will they try to develop innovations to further those goals.

11.   Eliminate Arbitrary Numerical Targets: Merely setting targets will not help. Very often data is fudged to meet targets. The processes must be improved so that the targets can be achieved.

12.   Permit Pride of Workmanship: Every component of the education process; management, principal, teachers, non-teaching staff and even students must be encouraged to take pride in their work. This may be achieved by giving greater operational independence as well as fulsome praise for achievements.

13.   Encourage Education: The entire staff and students must be educated regarding the concept of TQM. If this is done they will better understand tha importance of their tasks to the Mission of the Institution and may actively suggest improvements.

14.   Top Management Commitment and Action: The top management must be committed to the TQM philosophy and it must take action to ensure TQM within the Institution. A pro-active approaches needed otherwise the whole exercise may be reduced to a farce.

S. J. Lea, D. Stephenson and J. Troy, state that, students centred learning includes the following tenets :

1.   Increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the students.

2.   Active rather than passive learning.

3. Emphasis on deep learning and understanding.

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4. An increased sense of autonomy in the learner.

5. An independence between teacher and learner.

6. Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship.

His Excellency, Honourable President of India Mr. Pranab Mukherji,
insist that the development of appropriate learning experiences are essential in teaching-learning process. " Adaptation and application of new technology has to be an integral part of curriculum development for all stages of education. New methods and teaching aids must equip the younger generation to learn more, explore more and contribute more to the society"

The Higher Education System ensures the quality of the education process with the help of accreditation agencies established for the purpose. The main agency which accredits universities and colleges in general education is the National Assessment and Accreditation Council [NAAC] established by the UGC in 1994. In case of Technical Education similar function is done by The National Board of Accreditation [NBA] set up by AICT in 1994 and for Agricultural Education by the Accreditation Board [AB] set up by ICAR in 1996.

IV. Conclusions

In conclusion, one may say that systemic changes by the authorities can bring about much needed changes. However, expecting systemic changes for the better may be a forlorn hope.

This does not imply that nothing can be done. Each College can begin to carry out improvements by adopting minor incremental changes. Individually, none of the changes will create much difference, but collectively the changes can bring about great improvement in quality of higher education in India. In this respect, the concept of TQM can yield high dividends. The paper has shown that the process works through actual examples of improvements initiated by our Colleges.

It is also necessary for Colleges to interact with each other so that positive changes in any one institution are gradually adopted by the entire system. If all this is done the system of higher education in India will definitely improve for the better.

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