

EDITORIAL

ENSURING QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

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Individuals, nations and international bodies, all clamour for quality education. Mass media and other organisations bring out reports on the institutions where quality education is provided. At the international level, the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) is a world-wide association of over 200 organisations active in the theory and practice of quality assurance in higher education. At regional level, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) disseminates information, experiences and good practices in the field of quality assurance (QA) in higher education to European QA agencies, public authorities and higher education institutions. At national level, many nations have their own accreditation agencies. Besides these official agencies, many private organisations also rank the university level institutions. Prominent among them are: Academic Ranking of Universities; Leiden Ranking; QS World University Rankings; Ranking Web of Universities; and Time Higher Education Rankings. Details of criteria and weightage given to each criterion vary from one agency to another. Rankings help students and their parents to choose a high quality institution, depending on their purse. Many journals also rank colleges in their own country.

Quality of an institution is generally attributed to performance of its students in public examinations. Performance of a student in an examination cannot be definitely attributed to the efforts of his / her regular teachers. A large number of students take recourse to face to face or virtual mode coaching. Even performance of students in the Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD 2014), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) (Martin & Mullis 2011) and other international studies of student performance may be due to the effects of shadow education that facilitates better performance of students, whose parents are rich and make appropriate payment for shadow education including training for appearing in such tests. Bray and Lykens (2012, p. 67) reported that shadow education brings in competition between haves and have-nots and creates differentials. In many nations, in spite of specific regulations, shadow education continues to thrive. In developing and least developed nations, a large number of private schools/colleges pay lower salary than salary paid to teachers in similar posts in government schools/colleges. Such low paid teachers go for private coaching for extra income. Greed for earning more money also makes a number of government teachers give private coaching at the teacher's/student's home or in a coaching centre. The shadow education system affects quality in teaching in the regular classroom and the worst hit is the poor student. It brings in new challenges to the classroom teacher who in order to teach effectively also has to be aware of the progress of the students through their participation in the shadow education system. Equity is now a dream throughout the world. Rich has more opportunities to learn than the poor. These situations threaten the process of ensuring quality in educational management.

Besides learning through shadow education, a large number of students learn from Internet and from TV and radio Lessons of open universities, open schools and other distance education offering agencies. Today's teacher, in order to be more effective, has to be aware of such types of learning in the students and accordingly, develop strategies for classroom management. Such students may come across wrong data in internet. Teachers have to browse Internet and tell the students how to proceed in browsing. These situations require appropriate changes in educational management policies.

Ensuring quality management in education is a stupendous task and the strategies cannot be uniformly prescribed for all. Effective strategies vary from one nation to another and from one institution to another. Quality management requires appropriate funding of institutions. The possibility of institution utilising its

physical resources including giving a portion on rent is found in developed countries like UK. In 1979, the editor was staying in one of the hostels of the University of Edinburgh. All ground floor rooms facing the road to Edinburgh castle were shops which gave high rent to the university. Utilisation of school resources by public, on payment, was also noticed in Deans' Community at Livingstone, Edinburgh. In India, certain private institutions give on rent space for shops opened along its boundary wall. In 2009 December, the editor found that the hotel in Vienna, Austria, where he was accommodated was in fact a hostel of the university converted to hotel, during holidays. The students, desiring to earn money during holidays, work as hotel boys, cleaners, etc. Luggage of the boarders are locked in a room and on their return, they can get back. In a review of philanthropy in UK, Pearce (2012, p.9) recommended that "All universities should develop institutional advancement plans- including fund raising, alumni relations and communications activities – based on a clear understanding of their own distinctiveness, goals and particular opportunities." Should not the governments in least developed and developing countries go for such arrangements of augmenting non-conventional funding of their institutions by bringing in appropriate modifications in their rules and regulations governing land given to the private educational institutions or nature of utilisation of land in government institutions?

Education, in its process of expansion, gets more and more privatised. "Under the neo-liberal regime, education is redefined as a private commodity, marking a drastic shift from the post-war conception of public education as a common good" (Takayama 2008, p.391). About half a century ago, referring to then colonial India, Sri Aurobindo stated that "A large element of private and voluntary enterprise is a healthy element in the provision, of education. It is necessary for variety, life and progress as State control of generality and a high standard of efficiency" (Sri Aurobindo 2003, p.686). However, privatisation brings in its own created hazards in public education and public utilisation of facilities created by it. For instance, in case of medical education, high fee charging medical colleges, no doubt produce doctors, who may be more interested in getting back money invested in their medical education by indirectly charging their patients, by referring them for various tests. For instance, recently, it was found that when a doctor refers a patient for scanning, s/he gets 40% of the amount charged by the scanning agency. Hence, it is essential that the nations, especially, which have a large number of poor citizens, need to have a relook at their educational management policy so that appropriate investment is made for government managed no fee medical education.

In case of developed countries and in case of many institutions located in urban areas in developing as well as in least developed countries, the internet facilities provide high quality of self-learning opportunities. Such situations require appropriate blending of learning. It necessitates flexibility in rules and regulations for minimum percentage of attendance in school/ college classes. During the year 1978-79, the editor was a student of Diploma in Community Education Course of the University of Edinburgh, UK, the classroom was very small in size. Front door could not be opened as the clerk used to type in the opposite room. The only window could not be opened due to very low temperature. One of the teachers used to smoke, while teaching and the student gets headache by inhaling tobacco. As the said teacher knew that the same statistics was taught by the student in his own country, he allowed the student to skip his class and utilise that time in the library in the adjacent room. In days of ample opportunities for self-learning at one's own time and place, unfortunately the educational management policies, found in many nations, do not give freedom to the student to either attend the class or to do study independently. In the days of ample opportunity for self-learning, why should a student be compelled to attend a lecture, even if the student has gathered more material on the lecture from the internet than the material gathered by the teacher and dictated as note by him/her?

In many situations, some students come to the class, having completed the topic to be covered in the class, in their coaching centres or by self-learning. Hence, the teacher in such circumstances, not only have to be concerned with general students, but also have to have certain knowledge about the progress of the students in the coaching class or self learning materials available in the Internet to which they have access. Such teachers also need to be equipped with appropriate resources to give learning opportunities to the students, who have learnt already the material to be covered in the classroom. These situations also require appropriate changes in educational management policies that require freedom for teachers in designing curricular areas.

Teacher freedom in curricular management has been reported in many situations. In India, the practice of deciding how to learn and to some extent what to learn is found in the “Free Progress” system followed at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education at Pondicherry. In the beginning of the session, the teacher and student sit together and decide on what topics the students wants teacher to teach and on what the student wants to learn himself/herself. Of course, teacher has to be present at the appointed time every day, in case the student wants to clarify his/ her doubt. The Centre has a small number of students in each class for which personal attention is possible. In case of institutions having large sized classes, strategies need to be developed for allowing student freedom to learn and making a student learn independently, without needing assistance to learn. Modern techniques demand that the teacher develop the skills of self learning in the students. Today’s excellent teacher is not to be considered by assessing his/ her knowing level, but by assessing his/ her skill in making students learn themselves. Sri Aurobindo had said that the first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. An effective teacher should not be a task master. S/he has to be a helper and a guide. His/ her business has to suggest and not to impose. Such a teacher has to be innovative. OECD (2012, pp.33-34) giving stress suggested strategies such as: 1. Giving encouragement for experimentation and innovation in teaching practices, while recognising that experiments that fail are also important learning opportunities; 2. Giving encouragement to adopt exploratory approaches and incremental changes, including pilot testing and careful evaluation of innovative teaching methods; 3. Encouraging student involvement in the design, implementation and evaluation of innovative teaching and learning experiments; 4. Encouraging project-based learning or work-placement with possibility of their evaluation by external stakeholders, such as employers and local communities; 5. Encouraging students to critique, challenge tradition and contradict existing academic practice that enables development of a research mindset in them; 6. Facilitating collaboration among teachers within the institution and among the institutions for innovative teaching and learning techniques; and 7. Introducing inbuilt teacher performance appraisal with timely appropriate reward for efficiency.

Quality of educational management rests very much on the quality of the head of the institution. A few years ago, in India, the Odisha State Education Department sent a circular to the colleges that the principal has to supervise the classes and every month, the report has to come about number of classes supervised by the principal. In a government college, it was observed that although the principal never observed the classes, the teachers used to mention numbers of classes supervised by the principal. Management of education rests with the values nurtured by the head of the institution. In the systems, where the head of the institution is not sincere, the expectation of higher quality in management is a dream. The low value system in the head of the institution will get transferred in a more diluted stage to teachers. Rather the sincere teacher will suffer in an institution, where the head of the institution is insincere. Hence, in order to improve quality of institutions, the nations need to improve the quality of selection and training process of their heads of the institutions in combination with the appropriate changes in their rules and regulations that will promote flexibility and innovation in the education system.

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