



Quality Betterment of Higher Education in India

KEYWORDS

Quality Betterment, Higher Education and Quality Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this comparative study is to provide insight into the views of transnational corporations about higher education. Little appears to be known about how employers based in different countries perceive higher education in their countries, what skills and attributes they are seeking in their graduate recruits, what the aims of higher education should be and what changes are needed to the higher education system to meet the needs of employers. The increasingly globalized economy means that such a perspective can enhance our understanding of employers as a major stakeholder in higher education. This article identifies and evaluates outcomes from efforts to modify quality standards in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The National Policy on higher education of 1986 translate this vision of Radhakrishnan and Kothari Commission in five principles goals for higher education which include Greater Access, Equal access (or equity), Quality and excellence, Relevance and Promotion of social Values . The policy directions and actions covered in the 1992 "Program of Action "have been developed in a manner such that it translates these goals in to practice, giving the importance of the first three goals, namely Access, Equal Access and quality. Quality teaching has become an issue of importance as the landscape of higher education has been facing continuous changes. The student body has considerably expanded and

diversified, both socially and geographically. New students call for new teaching methods. Modern technologies have entered the classroom, thus modifying the nature of the interactions between students and professors. The governments, the students and their families, the employers, the funds providers increasingly demand value for their money and desire more efficiency through teaching.

MEANING OF QUALITY

The definition of quality teaching depends on the meaning of "quality", a multi-layered and complex word. Quality can be defined as an outcome, a property, or a process. Therefore it is hardly surprising that the phrase "quality teaching" has been given several definitions because definitions of quality are "stakeholder relative" (Harvey et al., 1992). Tam (2001) also found that all stakeholders held their own view of what quality in education means to them. Some scholars define quality in higher education as the process of quality enhancement.

QUALITIES AND ATTRIBUTES

Employers identified a range of attributes sought in graduates and commented on the perceived shortcomings of higher education institutions in encouraging their development. The skills and qualities sought by respondents comprised 'hard skills' such as knowledge, excellence in field

and/or technical expertise together with a range of 'soft skills' – key skills and personal attributes. 'Soft' skills were sometimes explicitly given priority over technical skills. Several respondents suggested that universities failed to promote the development of these skills. Employers also reported that they valued business experience very highly as many recruits found the transition from higher education to employment difficult.

AIMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Employers had diverse views of what they felt that the aims of higher education should be. Many of the issues raised were related to the development of key skills. These skills need to be acquired in addition to and certainly not at the expense of intellectual rigour. For some employers a crucial aim for higher education should be preparation for the world of work.

QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Respondents understood the concept of 'quality' in different ways. Some saw quality as relating to outcomes (e.g. employability), some to output (e.g. traditional academic standards) and a few understood it in terms of the quality of the educational process and to the value added by higher education for a given set of inputs. While some respondents saw an unproblematic relationship between entry requirements and educational outputs or employment outcomes, others were more guarded. Respondents were split as to whether high entry requirements tended to enhance or diminish the quality of the educational process. Most respondents reported that 'reputation' was a useful indicator. Only a minority said that it was not. A small number noted that reputations tend to lag behind reality, making it unreliable as a sole indicator of institutional quality. A high quality university education was identified in terms of inputs to the system (e.g. selection of students), process (e.g. teaching, learning, research) and outcomes (e.g. in relation to employability). Themes to emerge included self-learning, high quality university academics, innovation and research, sometimes with an explicit link to preparation for entry into the workforce.

SATISFACTION WITH THE RECRUITMENT

In virtually all cases, respondents reported that they were satisfied with the quality of graduates that they had employed in recent years. However, graduates were sometimes reported to lack certain key skills. The importance of work placements emerged as an important positive factor in terms of employers' satisfaction with graduates recruited.

EDUCATION IN A CHANGING GLOBAL SCENARIO

In the present context, education policies and strategies have to reckon with emerging challenges and opportunities that come from increasing globalization. The task of nation building has to take into account increasing demand for certain professional skills and knowledge that is linked to the labour market. A globalized world will ultimately require the outsourcing of human skills in regions which will witness a "demographic deficit". Skilled human capital will have to be imported to certain regions to sustain economic growth. This can offer tremendous opportunities for employment and growth provided the youth are equipped with requisite knowledge and skills in this era of Globalization and Internationalization of education, there will be impetus to mobility of people including students, teachers and researchers.

The main challenge, therefore, is to provide the requisite opportunities through investment in schools, colleges and universities. The access to quality education for all will create an environment whereby the fruits of development and growing opportunities are available to all sections. A further challenge is to ensure that the foreign institutions coming to India also fit in with the developmental goals of our nation. Faced with the complexity of current and future global challenges, institutions of education have the social responsibility to advance our understanding of multifaceted issues, which involve social, economic, scientific and cultural dimensions and our ability to respond to them.

QUALITY BETTERMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

Academic Reform Transformation of higher education requires specific strategies for academic reforms at the institutional level. Quality improvement in higher education has been initiated through restructuring academic programmes to ensure their relevance to modern market demands. Complete revamping of teaching/learning methods from instruction and rote learning to interactive process that encourages creativity and innovation and is based on compulsory seminar-tutorials is being advocated in the universities and colleges. Some universities have begun to follow semester system, modification in assessment and examination methods, teachers' assessment, acceptance of grade and credit system and other related reforms. The introduction of credit system in Indian universities will contribute to the development of quality in higher education through

using a common and transparent system for the measurement and expression of academic work and learning outcomes of the students. This will also facilitate the mutual recognition of degree and qualification and will also ensure compatibility with the academic norms practiced in similar institutions in India and abroad. UGC has written to all universities about the need to adopt credit system with credit accumulation along with other academic reforms while some of the universities have introduced the system recently, many others are in the process of introducing the same. It is suggested to introduce the credit system in phases. In the first phase the universities may consider to adopt the credit system in a few departments followed by the acceptance of the credit system across all departments. In the second phase, universities may ask all the autonomous colleges to follow the credit system and as the conditions develop, the credit system may be introduced at the undergraduate level. The whole process may take a longer time period depending on the maturity of the academic system.

These studies have given necessary input in evolving the perspective on each of these objectives. Since these studies are based on the serious research and examination of official data, the findings in many ways are new and insightful. The finding also presents the emerging issues in higher education system in the country and the possible way out. Since the studies are rich and new in their content the UGC decided to publish them in the form of a report for the use of the academic community. We are hopeful that the central and state government, academic administrator, policy maker, educational institutions, and researchers will find the insights of these studies of use for various purposes.

CONCLUSION

After independence, there has been tremendous increase in institutions of higher learning in all disciplines. But with the quantitative growth has it been able to attend to the core issue of quality. India is today one of the fastest developing countries of the world with the annual growth rate going above 9%. In order to sustain that rate of growth, there is need to increase the number of institutes and also the quality of higher education in India. To reach and achieve the future requirements there is an urgent need to relook at the Financial Resources, Access and Equity, Quality Standards, Relevance and at the end the Responsiveness. Quality has both absolute and relative meanings. The concept of absoluteness in quality props up the moral of the higher education system at the delivery end and at the receiving end i.e. Institutional and Students respectively. The quality of these components may also differ from institution to institution. Therefore, sharing of the experiences among institutions on quality issues may generate ideas for evolving norms and strategies for their quality assurance of management processes, curricular inputs and practices and the evaluation system as good manner.

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