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CHALLENGES AND ISSUES IN QUALITY EDUCATION

Challenges and Issues in Quality Education

Mira Mondal

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Education, Calorx Teachers' University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India

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INTRODUCTION

Today, education faces multiple challenges in terms of demand, supply, quality and returns, both for providers and the clientele concerned. The education system, from the highest levels down to the classroom, needs to deliver the knowledge and skills that students need, and to respond as those needs change. Quality tools and processes can help in this juncture. Education in India falls under the control of both the Union Government and the states, with some responsibilities lying with the Union and the states having autonomy for others. The factors that influence the big issues and challenge in turn contribute to the poor credibility of teacher education. This paper analyses some aspects of the issues and challenges in quality Education focusing on Liability, Coalition, Assessment, Shortage of Teachers and Declining Enrolment in Traditional Fields of Knowledge, Red Tapism and Global Competition.

Factors Influencing Challenges:

Liability: Methods are needed to judge the performance of processes within the system. Liability means establishing: A systematic method to assure stakeholders (educators, policy-makers and the public) that schools are producing desired results. Common elements that are applied to all participants. These should include clear goals, progress indicators, and measures, analysis of data, reporting procedures, and help for participants not meeting goals, and consequences and sanctions. From Liability methods, the need for continuous improvement can become clear.

Coalition: A curriculum must match relevant testing programs' evaluation measures and requirements.

Assessment: Education system needs measures for assessing how well students are doing. These measures should incorporate feedback from students, parents, the community and other stakeholders. Types of assessment include External assessment, Classroom assessment, and Alternative assessments.

Factors Influencing Issues:

The factors that contribute to the big issues and challenges that contribute to the poor credibility of teacher education include, Perceived low teacher quality, Students low scores on standards-based tests ,Teacher "drop out" rate facilitating floating population, Quality of teacher education candidates from the general talent pool and non-subject majors, Perceived ineffective preparation programs, Lack of common agreement on a vision and outcomes for beginning ,Reluctance to change programs by insiders that is perceived /presented as radical /innovative, Lack of research on program effectiveness, especially in terms of student learning, teacher retention and performance, Reluctance by teacher educators to be strong on accreditation (we argue about the ten percent we don't agree on), Lack of systematic education involvement in the professional development of teachers, especially in on-going and relevant ways, Lack of perceived involvement in the lives of institutions in fundamental ways, Lack of perceived public advocacy for teachers, in the profession .Lack of acknowledgement of shifting paradigms in education:

1. From time-constant and outcome-variable to time-variable and outcome-constant

2. From educational opportunity for all to learning for all (of essential knowledge and skills)

3. From teacher performance to student performance

Shortage of Teachers:

Economic growth led by industrial and service sector during the last decade has created more opportunities and faster career growth for the young talent. Further, the lucrative salaries and glamour has acted as catalyst in attracting talent to such fast growing sectors. Higher education in India which has been passing through transition on account of privatization and withdrawal of financial support from the government has been finding it difficult to attract adequate number of young talent to teaching job. It is

a big challenge for higher education sector to sustain in future due to lack of availability of faculty.

Declining Enrolment in Traditional Fields of Knowledge:

The changing economic structure coupled with cultural transformation in terms of life style has lead to shift in choice for studies. The major chunk from youth opts for professional courses leading to early employment and faster growth. Therefore, the teaching and research in such faculties is able to attract the best of the talent leaving only a few for fundamental research in basic sciences, literature, art and languages. It, thus, poses the challenge to the sustenance and the development of these basic pillars of knowledge.

Red Tapism:

It is an irony in India that the bureaucracy restricts the modernization and expansion of higher education by private players intended to impart quality education. At the same time a large number of institutions without having adequate infrastructure and offering sub-standard education are not only surviving but flourishing. Therefore, to develop a professional, transparent and efficient mechanism to ensure expansion of quality education at a fast pace is greatly desirable.

Global Competition:

India being a signatory of WTO is bound to open up its market for trade in services including education but it does not have a clear policy for strengthening its education sector to compete with the giants in the world. Policy restrictions stop the competent institutions from making necessary changes in the processes of admission, recruitment and salaries of faculty/ staff and opening campuses abroad. In lack of proper policy provisions in time, higher education sector in the country is adversely affected.

Suggestions to dilute the density of the problems:

o   Be proactive, not reactive

o   Produce data and share it(on candidates, impact of program completers on success stories, program outcomes)

o   Be proud and advocate for the teaching career

o   Revise teacher education programs-and do research on it

o   Take back professional development for in-service

It should be recognized that addressing some of these issues well may be difficult under a very traditional university reward structure. It is a truism that an institution will only go where its reward structure permits. While the intention is to be provocative, they also are intended to provoke great thought and action by all teacher education faculties to address issues and challenges facing the preparation of today's teachers at all levels. The higher educational institutions suffer from large quality variation in so much so that a NASSCOM-MacKinsey Report-2005 has said that not more than 15per cent of graduates of general education and 25-30per cent of Technical Education are fit for employment. The various regulatory bodies regulating higher education have constituted autonomous bodies for monitoring quality standards in the institutions under their purview.

For example, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) by UGC, National Board of Accreditation (NBA) by AICTE, Accreditation Board (AB) by ICAR, Distance Education Council (DEC) by NCTE etc. Jitendra Kumar Mishra in JBS Working Paper Series W.P. No. JIITU/JBS/2008/01 states that, though, there exists autonomous bodies for assessment and monitoring quality standards in the institutions of higher education they suffer from two major deficiencies. First the quality norms of such councils are not comparable with international standards. Secondly, the enforcement process is not stringent. Further political interference and corruption dilute the role and impact of these intuitions in ensuring the desired quality standards.

CONCLUSION:

Our country has a well-developed educational set up in terms of range of programs and their acceptability in local industry, but it lacks in terms of international quality standards. Higher education institutions managed by private sector emphasize more on commercial aspect than creation of knowledge which leads to deterioration of quality of education. There is no effective system to monitor and control violation of the existing norms by the institutions on the other. Further, the political parties manipulate the issues of access and equity in higher education for their vested political interest rather than taking the right steps to enhance the quality of higher education. As a result those who can afford the high cost of higher education look forward for the opportunities abroad while the others have to compromise with sub-standard education. If India has to emerge as preferred location for quality education in the globalizing world it will have to develop a national policy to address the challenges of sub-standard quality, ineffective systems of monitoring and control, red-tapism in growth and development and political interference.

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