

TOWARDS AN EDUCATED INDIA:

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY AND MAKING OF UNEMPLOYED GRADUATES

It is estimated that the national gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education in India is around 19% of which around 5% is in technical education. Again according to one estimate at least 25 million students are eligible for higher education every year (after school). The question is: are there adequate higher education institutes which can absorb these 25 million students? As against this availability of institutions for the students or even access to such institutions, the challenge is to provide quality education. Quality education implies that all those students who qualify should be employable and not underemployed.

The challenge to provide quality education is dependent primarily on the three main stakeholders, namely, the students, faculty and industry. Rarely does the industry take an interest in providing quality education through guest lectures or as visiting faculty. The only personnel from the industry who are readily available as guest lecturers or as visiting faculty are those who are retired and who would now like to "contribute to the society" (In fact for many of them the issue is: 'how do I spend my time now that I am out of office'). This implies that the burden of providing quality education lies mainly on the faculty (as givers) and on the students (as receivers).

Both these stakeholders are involved in a win/win situation. The objective for the student is to get a good certificate while for the faculty it is to get good feedback. The students believe that the institution is merely a place for getting a certificate. In many cases, they believe that the certificate is a passport for securing employment and is obtainable as soon as the fees are paid. All the information that is required is available on the internet, which can be easily digested by reading casually before the exams. The students also believe conveniently what they hear from the industry personnel – the syllabus is outdated, what is actually required is not available in the institutions and so on, forgetting that what industry preaches is the application of the fundamentals. Without the fundamental knowledge, application is not possible.

Discussions with knowledgeable persons in the higher educational institution reveal that it is a Herculean task to get the students to pay attention in a guest lecture. These discussions also reveal that students prefer to sit in the canteen discussing social problems rather than



attending the lecture. Students need to be coaxed or incentivized in the form of additional marks to attend these lectures. In many cases, students come to the class academically unprepared – be it for the regular session or for a case discussion. Thus the students pretend to learn by attending the institution not the classroom, library or computer lab.

At times, parents strongly believe that the failure of the student implies that the faculty does not understand the subject or the faculty does not communicate well. So, the problem lies with the teachers and not the students.

The same is true also in the case of the younger faculty. In one of the institutes, it was found that head of the department had to remind the full-time faculty several times to attend a guest lecture by a senior educationist with several years of experience in examination reform.

Students demand a good placement, both in terms of companies as well as in terms of pay packages. Yet, basic questions are unanswered. Their attire has moved towards being more casual, and showing up late for an interview is the norm of the day. In one institute, for an interview at 2 pm, the students are deliberately told to come by 12 noon, so that at least by 2 pm students are available for the interview.

The faculty also believes that in order to win this game, there is a need to play along. The faculty sometimes pretends to teach. Many times it has been found that he/ she is inadequately prepared for the lecture and in order to cover this inadequacy is quite liberal in the evaluation of the student. This can be seen from the fact that many students label faculty – such as liberal a strict.

The net result is an all-round dissatisfaction from the faculty, students and the industry.

This dissatisfaction can perhaps be reduced by controlling the input side of the institution, that is, by reducing the intake of students, limiting the number of higher education institutions and by continuously monitoring the academic progress of the students, by helping the students develop holistically, ensuring development of soft skills through involvement in socially involved projects etc. Additionally, it would also be better if the industry takes an active part in the educational system by participating in the same rather than just crying foul of the educational system.

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