



## Quality education in 21<sup>st</sup> century: An important pillar for nurturing employability quotient among youth

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### Abstract

India is a home to one of the largest networks of educational system in the world providing education to millions of youth every year but we can hardly boast of any institutions achieving global standards as revealed by various surveys and studies. It is needless to say that 'Quality Education' is the need of the hour as it guarantees the students in achieving what they are good at while ironically emphasis is laid only on giving education but not making them fit for the world of work. This results in students remaining unemployable or satisfying themselves with jobs totally unrelated to their developed skills. Government initiatives through establishment and operating of several central institutions of higher learning are nevertheless bearing fruits, but still a lot needs to be done for the average youth of this country who constitutes our main strength today. The theoretical phenomenon under study looks into quality education provided by higher education in India and their ways to improve it. The study also gives a suggestive road map to enhance quality education for nurturing employability quotient among youth.

**Keywords:** quality, higher education, employability, teacher, India

### Introduction

Quality is defined as the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something. When we connect it to education, we go to an entirely different phase of its definition that encompasses various factors. Quality education has been defined as one that provides all learners with capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual well-being. Quality movement worldwide has its roots in Medieval Europe where, in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century craftsmen began organizing themselves into unions called guilds. The guilds appointed inspection committees which developed and set strict rules and requirements for the quality of every product and service.

The committees, while enforcing the set rules by way of placing special marks on flawless goods to serve as proof of quality and good reputation of the producers, went further to include mechanisms that enabled the tracing of the origin of any faulty goods. The craftsmanship model of product inspection and verification spread into the industrialized world in the 1750s and into European industrial revolution in the early 1800s.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century manufacturers began to include quality processes and practices as part requirements for ensuring the quality of products and services. When the United States of America joined World War II a sampling technique was introduced for the inspection of military products from different sources. Military specification standards were published alongside training manuals in process control techniques. When we move towards quality in education, there is no common agreement on its definition. Quality in education may refer to indications of fitness for purpose, i.e.,

institutional vision and mission, levels of achievement, perfection, excellence and value for money spent on the expected service. Quality may refer to what students will have learnt – what they know, what they can do and what their attitudes are as a result of their interactions with their teachers, departments and environments of education institutions. Quality education leads to making of quality citizens. With India as a home to one of the largest networks of educational system in the world, we can hardly boast of any institutions achieving global standards as revealed by various surveys and studies. Government initiatives through establishment and operating of several central institutions of higher learning are nevertheless bearing fruits, but still a lot needs to be done for the average youth of this country who constitutes our main strength today.

### Theoretical framework

It is needless to say that 'Quality Education' is the need of the hour. Students go through the learning process to make themselves employable. Students would like to gain knowledge, acquire skills, an ability to differentiate and finally to develop own character so as to become a useful member of the society. Quality education is the one which guarantees the students in achieving what they are good at, while ironically emphasis is laid only on giving education but not making them fit for the world of work. This results in students remaining unemployable or satisfying themselves with jobs totally unrelated to their developed skills. A newspaper report says that in a particular state of the country, 300 engineering graduates have applied for a two year B.Ed programs. This conveys that the supply of engineering graduates far exceeds the demand or their employability for technical jobs is poor. Surprisingly both are true in the present context. That should not limit the study of technical or professional

courses as they form the pillar for economic development. However quality needs to be built into not only in engineering education but in every other program or course which a student pursues.

It has been seen in Global ranking of higher education institutions that India does not figure in the emerging good rankers. (Yeravdekar, Tiwari 2014) <sup>[10]</sup> The concern about India's poor representation in global rankings leads to a useful discussion. We have 30,500 institutes of higher learning and not one in top 200 globally. Something is going horribly wrong. To break the vicious cycle, we will need to start with the gardener, who must sow the virtuous seed – the teacher. This transition from teacher centric teaching is not just imminent but an unstoppable reality. It limns the global positioning of premier institutions and is an inducement to academic excellence. There lies a vast distance between the Indian academic system at present and one that can spawn world class universities, much less the resources that would be required. Literature suggests, the notion of world class university is determined by utilising four distinct pillars, such as, i) Research quality, ii) Teaching quality, iii) Graduate employability and iv) International outlook (Rauhvarges, 2011) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Everyone has the right to receive education not only education but an education of high quality. That form of learning with best fits the present and future needs of community. Quality education has since the 80's become a key concept in education related discussions. Education as mostly is related to the teachers providing it. It is a unique exchange between a student and a teacher that contributes to the development of both. In most of the countries it is strongly agreed that quality of education needs to be improved for the benefits of every stakeholder attached to it and most importantly, the students. They can go a long way in developing valuable attributes which can be further encashed into their own benefits in particular and to the nation in general. Therefore a crucial importance is attached to developing good quality teachers who build up good quality graduates which benefit the whole community. This dimension of quality is essential for the enhancement of employability in the graduates. According to OECD report Quality in teaching (1994), it defines teacher quality in 5 dimensions

- Knowledge of substantive areas and content
- Pedagogic skill
- Reflections
- Empathy
- Managerial competence

The integration of competencies across these dimensions of teacher quality is thought to mark the outstanding teacher. No teacher is born outstanding; it is education, training and experience that help him to improve quality. Teachers can improve quality in them by being quality aware, professionally ethical and should work on professional freedom. Apart from personal responsibility of developing themselves, government also has a significant role to play. There are many examples where teachers are trying to do their best but due to lack of support from government or different authorities, it remains confined to a teacher's aspirations only. In order

to support teachers in their efforts to improve quality of education, the government must provide education and professional development of high quality to the teachers and necessary resources for facilitating quality education. All these efforts with other initiatives could help in a better way, in development of quality education that would serve as one of the important pillars in enhancement of employability.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the understanding and importance of quality education and how employability can be enhanced by bringing notion of quality teaching and research in learning and doing. For personal social and economic health of the community, government in all parts of the world are recognising the value of education. Once the basic education requirement is fulfilled, next emphasis is placed upon raising standards of teaching learning and achievement. (Day 2000) explains the challenges before teachers in 21st century and considers the educational success of schools in changing times dependent on the investment in maintaining their intellectual and emotional self. As teaching is always concerned with the betterment of the pupils, in the same way government is concerned with the betterment of schools and academicians and heads for betterment of teachers. There is a need for professional development opportunities for providing support to efficient teaching mechanism. Development of good teachers should be seen as a priority from government, school leaders and teachers themselves. It should be acknowledged that experience alone will not guarantee good teaching and learning neither every environmental circumstance is always conducive to high quality teaching and learning. Good investment in teachers should be made to handle the challenges of 21st century.

Quality is a highly contested concept with different people attaching different meaning to it. (Tam 2001) <sup>[9]</sup> analysed the perception about higher education and quality and their relevance to the measurement of performance of Universities and colleges and explored their methods for the assurance of quality management in higher education. A simple production model depicting a direct relationship between inputs and outputs that measured the gain higher education gave to the students before and after joining. The major conclusions of the study were premised on two important considerations: that maximizing student's educational development is a central activity of Higher Education and that its continuous improvement to maximize student learning that remains the basic goal of Universities and should be the focus of any concern over quality in higher education and its measurement. There have been contested views over the dimension of quality and its measurement. Therefore to understand this concept it is mandatory to recognise that it has contradictory meaning that can lead to different assessments and different practical outcomes. (Knight 2001) stated that good quality education leads to good jobs, if the labour market is difficult, to employability. The concern for employability is a concern for quality (Harvey *et al.*). It is widely accepted that a highly qualified, flexible, continuously updating labour force is closely correlated with a country's economic performance.

Higher education is expected to prepare students and society for future employment and employability. Employability is seen as a performance indicator in quality framework of higher education (Storew & AamodT 2010, Morley 2001) <sup>[8]</sup>. Quality of education is mostly reflected in the employability and employability is more precisely related to the utility of study program for career and work.

### **Suggestive roadmap to enhance quality education**

Quality makes education as much socially relevant as it is personally indispensable to the individual. It has become the defining element of education in 21st century. Therefore every higher education Institution should possess a vision of quality and excellence which is a challenge faced by all higher education Institutions. They should adopt best practices which add value to an Institution and its stakeholders. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) is advocating the best practices benchmarking approach for quality enhancement in higher education. They have adopted an inductive 5 stage strategy known as '4 I and D model' involving:

- Identification of best practices
- Implementation of best practices
- Institutionalization of best practices
- Internalization of best practices and
- Dissemination of best practices

Here they identify the best practices depending on institutional goals, pedagogic requirements, global concerns, local contexts, competencies of staff, infrastructural facilities and governance requirements. After identifying the best practices we need to implement them and focus more on performance than on promises. One cannot do with the best practices unless institutionalizing them and making them an integral part of the institutional working and internalizing them by making them a part of one's nature and habit. At last the higher education system does not only have the social responsibility of application of best practices but also an equal social responsibility of dissemination of these practices for wider application in the system. It is a fact that best practices are borrowed practices. We must learn and benefit from each other's experience and finally students for whom the whole system is designed, also have the major share of responsibility for desiring and demanding the best then everything else will follow. Since Quality Education Plans are derived from the perceived needs of society, those entrusted with their enhancements should continuously monitor all the changes that are occurring in society to ensure that the education that is being delivered to learners prepare them to cope with these changes. Higher education institutes should ensure leadership at all levels of the education system that is committed and buys into the vision of what this quality education is intended to achieve and is capable of converting the vision to measurable goals to guide the process. The teachers who are entrusted with the task of delivering this quality education and those persons entrusted with the task of guiding the process should possess the necessary tools to carry out their jobs. To do this, it will be necessary to offer

targeted continuous professional development to (CPD) these teachers. One should focus on enhancing the critical thinking skills of the leadership, teachers and learners of all ages. Providing learning opportunities for those persons outside of the formal education system who, for whatever reason, didn't manage to grasp much from their earlier schooling, because they have a role to play in their children's learning, a role that they will not be able to play well if they are not literate and numerate. Authorities must reward teachers with cash or kind to motivate them for best results.

### **Conclusion**

The concept of continuous quality improvement in higher education sweeping the globe because the intellectual heritage and ideals of higher education throughout the world believe in quality and believe in quality graduates. Students and other stakeholders are looking for the 'best buy' in the educational market. If one university does not deliver on its promises, students pack up and move down the block to the one that will (Seymour, 1993) <sup>[7]</sup>. In the end, the university's success depends on the success of its graduates. Because of this competitive market and the demands of the new global economy, university leaders worldwide are searching for better ways to manage and improve the quality of higher education. As leaders in higher education, the challenge and responsibility is to educate and graduate quality students who can be employable in real means and can shape their careers well in advance according to completion around.

Development of good teachers is an effective way to boost quality education and should be seen as a priority from government, school leaders and teachers themselves. It should be acknowledged that experience alone will not guarantee good teaching and learning neither every environmental circumstance is always conducive to high quality teaching and learning. Good investment in teachers should be made to handle the challenges of 21st century. In order to support teachers in their efforts to improve quality of education, the government must provide education and professional development of high quality to the teachers and necessary resources for facilitating quality education. All these efforts with other initiatives could help in a better way, in development of quality education that would serve as one of the important pillars in enhancement of employability. Higher education is expected to prepare students and society for future employment and employability. Employability is seen as a performance indicator in quality framework of higher education (Storew & AamodT 2010, Morley 2001) <sup>[8]</sup>. Quality of education is mostly reflected in the employability and employability is more precisely related to the utility of study program for career and work. Therefore the curriculum devised for graduates should also be made taking into account the expectations of global employers. When universities are able to produce quality output in the form of employable graduates then companies are also expected to be benefitted from this able lot, which in turn would be beneficial for the society that the company is offering services to.

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