Changes and Challenges in Higher Education

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Abstract

India was known for its teaching during 18th century, but now it seems that we have lost our way, therefore it is need of hour that we identify our shortcomings and try to rectify them in urgent manner. Higher education system in India, lately, adds more than three-and-half lakh engineers and twenty-five lakh university graduates annually to the country's technical workforce, yet a hoofing about 5 million graduates remain unemployed, grossly attributed to their ill—preparedness for the market. This situation aroused due to not adapting the requirement and upgrading the system. This paper is an attempt to look into this aspect and suggesting some ways to meet the challenges.

Keywords: Professional Education, System, Industry –academia inter linkages, Adaptiveness

Introduction: With the dwindling job opportunities in government sectors and increasingly encouraging environment in private sectors, there is a paradigm shift in intellectual thoughts with regard to not only the designing of professional courses to cater to the need of the hour. Higher education system in India, lately, adds more than three-and-half lakh engineers and twenty-five lakh university graduates annually to the country's technical workforce, yet a hoofing about 5 million graduates remain unemployed, grossly attributed to their ill-preparedness for the market amongst others, rendering them professionally unworthy, The efforts at the policy-making level have been inadequate to address this malady, Historically, Indian students are brilliant as per global standards, but their scholar-to -professional transition seems much longer compared to their counterparts in the developed countries, Seriously, they must be finding it difficult to bridge the gap between the two facets, National surveys reveal that only one in four engineering graduates is employable, based not solely on technical skills alone but also language fluency, teamwork and presentation skills. The problem seemingly lies in the lack of critical (or out-of-box) thinking, typically discouraged in Indian pedagogy. A major criterion that distinguishes a traditional course from a professional course is that, the latter is more 'application oriented' rather than just 'text-book based'. To elaborate, the latter encourages thoughts and actions beyond the textbook, point is, are we the academics ready to accept this fact, and do something urgently. Science-based developments are indicative of positive impact of research and the spillover effects in the industry-academia linkages through pronounced flow of knowledge and information between the two partners. Indian education system is still stuck with the old educational administration concepts. Indian universities are infamous globally for offering no tangible educational planning-n-development programme. Demand is expanding everywhere for professionals high on business culture, professional standards, work ethics, innovation, good practices, workforce use, and the ability to apply technology in a creative and workable manner.

Problems: It's a popular viewpoint of spiritual India that, Lord Ganesh (for knowledge/intellect) and Goddess Lakshmi (for wealth) go well together. Thus, an academic institution is branded as a temple of learning rather than an institute of technical and business excellence. Obviously, the concept of technology business becomes lackluster. Academicians have been knowledge

disseminators rather than knowledge and wealth creators, thus a big gorge in the works and perceptions of things by industries and the academia. The latter imparts education for education, and at best research sake without really bothering about the 'balance sheet' and the former looks at any-and-everything from the 'balance-sheet' perspective. The latter is passionate about intellect-excellence, and the former obviously passionately follow the market-orientations. Sometimes even at the cost of technology marvels and refinement. One common interest is, however, growing and changing in time. Industry-institute interaction, thus, could benefit from knowledge-base available with the institutes and the institutes can benefit from the practical experience and exposure of the professional world. Some of the identified gaps observed in the students to be exposed for mutual benefit are:

Industry Orientation - Indian education system still follows an examination-based evaluation process which can, and has to be, reoriented towards live project-based assessments.

Rigidity - Since all higher educational institutions are under the ambit of UGC regulations, the flexibility of the course redesigning and reevaluation process is compromised with. The system requires being more flexible giving the local administration a greater freedom.

Out-dated and Out-of-focus Refresher and Value Addition Courses - Lack of industry and business experience of the academicians themselves adds to the existing problem. Hence, their reorientation is suggested with focused refresher and value-addition exposures.

Attention Towards Pure Sciences - The science that may bring in new varied concepts and tickle the young minds creatively and innovatively needs to be encouraged.



Recommended Measures to Meet the Challenge

Improve Governance of Academic Institutions and Industry Linkages: Establish a process for mandatory registration of institutions with sector-specific professional bodies with representatives from the industry, academia and the government to ensure quality in higher education and training in the country. This body should be empowered to grant a special recognition to the institutions meeting the standards.

Multidisciplinary Team Approach: Social science being subject concerned to human being requires multifaceted form of research. It is impossible to meet with design requirement of uniformity, but through multi disciplinary approach it is very possible to come out with solution. It is therefore recommended that cross-disciplinary research be part of the training; it can probably be best practiced at the postgraduate level. There is much to be gained through input from different disciplines when such team research is executed.

Diversification -and Specialized Training: Specialized training with a focus on specialties is required. Specialties in the management area with, human resource management and technology management, is becoming need of hour. Hence, every scholar associated with management has to devote more of their time on managing various functional issues requiring pragmatic approach.

Hands-on: Experience: .Competitive-grant programmes should be further encouraged to upgrade academic laboratories so that they can provide a high quality training and on-hand experience for a larger number of students.

Attract Top Talents to the Faculty Pool: There have been certain encouraging reforms in this regard in Indian education system. Some other considerations to accelerate this could be:

Attract high-performing scientist/technocrat from abroad (like 'Magnet' Programmes).

- Give special consideration and incentives for industrial experience.
- Encourage interested and potential academicians to join industries on Leon.
- Financial freedom to academicians for patents, consultancy & Industry-interactions.
- Delimit earning from industry-funded projects.
- Depute researchers/academicians to corporate for right blending of theory and practice.
- Facilitate easy and smooth technology- transfer from academia to the industry, the intellectual property rights secured with the concerned researcher/academician.

Technology Transfer (ToT) : Engineers from the IIT are uniquely educated to bridge the gap between the science and the\product process. ToT may include dissemination of published scientific and technical literature, exchange of manufacturing technology, transfer of engineering proposals and technical information through trade exhibits, professorial meetings and collaborative research agreements.' Effective communication and ToT are mutually beneficial and critically important to the national economic security. The government needs to create a, friendly environment as practicable to increase cooperative activities between national labs,

industry and Universities with emphasis to ToT, on a PPP-mode. Some suggested steps that the Government could take up with regard to ToT are:

- Impart quality training to the scientific and professional pool.
- Invest in shared facilities as 'National Recourses Centre'.
- Build private/government funded time-shared facilities with leading edge in fracture and repositories of knowledge. The IT and Biotech parks already are steps forward in this direction.
- Promote 'Research-Translation Centers'. These will help to translate research into industrial products. A technology-business-incubator (TBI) is such and initiative.
- Encourage existing research centers to become 'Centers of excellence and Innovation' hubs. Each institute may earmark a few of the specific specialized areas for research.
- Ally with leading foreign institutes International linkages needs to be encouraged to showcase Indian R&D capabilities in the global market.

Effective Industry Involvement

- Corporate may participate in discussion on major commercialization-related policy issues. Executives may be nominated to governing board of academic institutions.
- Hold business plan competitions jointly sponsored by industry and academia.
- Partner with researchers to commercialize research finding through facilitated interactions. Academia- industry must operate on partnership mode.

The Governments need to take prompt action and provide suitable incentives to establish. A national programme in market-worthy educational practices, thus calling for collaborations between governmental infrastructure and resources, industry and the academia in:

- Rapidly translating scientific discoveries into, marketable products and processes.
- Understanding the needs of the copy-right protection

• Promoting cross-diplomacy research and education and thereby fostering innovative multidisciplinary solution to these days' ever-complicated problems.

• Providing a growing cadre of industry-ready professionals for production to marketing to product and-process development/validation to value-addition that caters to the needs of a globally expanding business and entrepreneurship.

• Rather than the educational courses remaining as a never-ending learning process, systems need to develop to support and promote a finishing school concept demarcating the end of the learning-phase and the beginning of a professional-phase.

Conclusion: Effective policy-making and implementation intervention in professional needs, variable sector specific skills, and performance-enhancing specialized exposure is urgent. Business expectations must be articulated in educational industry leaders engaged in course designing. Student interactions and technology-business incubation. 'Research for research-sake' servers no good; such efforts must add application dimension to the knowledge gained.

Organizational autonomy, self-governance, and management in accountability, efficiency and productivity must be persevered, through planning, strategic development, performance, measurement, quality improvement, professional development, institutional and cultural change, resource mobilization, marketing, and public relations.

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