

SOME ASPECTS OF LIBERALIZATION OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN INDIA : A CALL OF THE DAY

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ABSTRACT

This paper emphasizes that the education system of right type should be in right hands. It has also presented the state-of-the-art and has attempted to point out the causes of its today's limited utility. It has been proposed that the Government should exercise the least control over the general education in general, and over the Technical and Management Education in particular. Liberalization (privatization) of Technical and Management Education, it is argued, can ameliorate the situation to a large extent provided that a healthy attitude is developed in the society, and that it is in the hands of worthy people. Private agencies, thus, can help promote so badly needed competitiveness at international level through proper technical manpower planning and development.

1 INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in furthering the national gross growth, wellbeing and prosperity [1]. The right type of education, therefore, in the right hands can significantly influence the extent of achievements of the objectives of education system. The objectives of the education system can be summarized as given below [2]:

- ° To develop generations having enduring values of life in society, thereby yielding peace and tranquillity amongst men; and
- ° To instill amongst generations how to live to the (right) values of life, and bring the entire generation to enjoy a greater quota of intellectual peace, mental stability, health, social happiness, and national wellbeing and welfare.

Since the evolution of man on the earth, education system in one or the other form

has been persisting, and it has been subjected to modifications, corrections and improvements from time to time commensurate with the needs of the day.

2 THE STATE-OF-THE-ART

The existing education system in India is a rigid and quite formal one. The system was designed by British rulers with a sole objective of turning the (very small) upper class of society into a permanent source for recruitment to subordinate administrative cadre so as to enable them to smoothly rule this vast country. Naturally, the administrative, academic and financial functions of the then education system were fully governed by them. No doubt, it did some limited good to the society as a whole. Unfortunately, the same education system with some trivial modifications here and there is being implemented even after 45 years of independence. It now needs overhauling and revamping. The New

Education Policy 1986 and subsequent publication on Promised Programme of Action by the Government of India is a heartening step towards improving the present system. Several socio-economic problems, like, illiteracy, unemployment, drug addiction in young generation, rising criminal tendencies enlarging gap between haves and have-nots, etc., are surfacing violently and they have posed formidable problems before educationists, national leaders and social scientists. Some concrete directives and strategies need now to be evolved to effectively handle these issues. Analysis of the present system and its redesign based on our requirements need to be done promptly. The education system can be categorized into two subsystems, namely, general (non-professional) education, and professional education. Technical and Management Education, a vital component of professional education, significantly influences the socio-economic environment of a country. The scope of this paper is, however, limited to this component only.

3. TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN INDIA

This section presents the major features of Technical and Management Education in India.

3.1 Objectives of Technical and Management education

The objectives of Technical and Management Education can be briefly presented as given below [3] :

- ° To impart effectively technical and analytical skills to students; and
- ° To inculcate social consciousness amongst students' community.

The fulfillment of these objectives are expected to yield the following end results :

1. Development of capacity in the students for tackling engineering/managerial problems;

2. Promotion of technical know-how in students regarding analysis, design and manufacture of products/services;
3. Inculcation of good moral and ethical values, and
4. Sense of social obligations in students.

3.2 Status of Technical and Management Education in India

As mentioned earlier, the status of the Technical and Management Education in India has not been radically modified since 1947 save establishment of few prestigious IITs, and changes in structures and curricula keeping, more or less, the entire control in the hands of Government. The technical institutions in India can be categorized as given below :

1. Government institutions.
2. Grant-in-aided institutions
3. Private institutions which are non-aided but controlled by University and other Government bodies, like AICTE and Directorate of Technical Education.

Unfortunately, over the years, an attitude that everything under the sun need to be executed and controlled by the Government has been permitted to percolate in the minds of masses. Even the privileged class desires to avail of the subsidized education at the cost of masses as if it is the responsibility solely of the Government. To cope up with the international competitiveness, we now need trained technical and managerial manpower. The Government and grant-in-aided colleges, which are small in number, cannot cope up with the ever increasing demand of such trained manpower. Moreover, with rapid expansion of education at school and junior college levels, a large number of students passing SSC and HSC examinations have been denied the right of professional education only because of limited availability of such colleges. Besides these factors, in the present age of information explosion, the information capability (i.e.,

ability of problem finding, problem cognizing, search, insight, predicting, evaluating and computing) possessed by an individual or an organization is badly limited and bounded resulting in bounded rationality [4]. It, therefore, invites a very good team work at all levels in a country or in an organization. The application of group intelligence, therefore, can help promote the gainful utilization of the available opportunities in a country. Liberalization of Technical and Management Education is one of the steps to overcome the present situation. An attempt, therefore, is being made for effective handling of the issue by permitting private agencies since 1983 or so, to start their technical institutions. Especially, the southern states, such as Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu and Andhra are the leaders in opening such colleges in a large number probably over 150 colleges or so.

4. PRIVATIZATION : A WAY TO PROSPERITY

The concept that privatization means a license for accepting donations/capitation, is not a healthy one. Privatization, on the other hand, means believing and trusting in godly part of human mind which is believed to do a lot of good to the society. It is the trusteeship given in the hands of an individual or a group of individuals who dedicates his toil for the good of masses. It is, therefore, proposed that privatization can play a vital role in promoting Technical and Management Education in India provided that some self-disciplined norms are observed by management personnel.

In the Indian context, privatization of education is not new to us. The ancient Induan Gurukul system was nothing but a well-set form of privatization of education. The students were known after the names of their Gurus who owned the Ashramas and used to teach the students with their best capabilities as per the need of society. The ancient Nalanda and Takshshila

Universities were the glaring examples of liberalization (privatization) of education in those days. Though, the cost of education was apparently borne by Guru, the cost of education borne by society and students was equally high. For example, the society or the king had to support Ashramas, and students used to offer the Gurudakshina. In view of this, the issue before us now is how can we channelize the present process of privatization of Technical and Management Education in India towards the good of society.

4.1 Privatization : A Call of the Day

Many of the colleges have been opened under the banner of some politically strong groups. This is but natural. Some managements may be after minting money through capitation or donations. Though, it is legally prohibited, it does exist in one or other form. This pervades because a section of society either is capable of bearing the high cost of education or is after short-range gains causing long-range losses to the society as a whole. It is, in fact, a two-way traffic. It indicates the prevalent social attitude of the parties involved. The answer to the following questions can illustrate this point :

1. What is the percentage of students going for technical education (diploma, degree and post-graduate) who come from uppermiddle class and upper class sections of society ?
2. What is the cost of education (including coaching, etc.) upto SSC and HSC levels borne by the parents of such students?

If one really gets the statistics in the matter, it is not difficult to show that in India technical education is almost free (i.e., at the cost of public) and the needy section of the society remains where it was. However, privatization, one of the steps towards education-liberalization, has posed, it being in a transition stage, certain problems before us. It is, therefore, necessary that the advantages of privatization be

maximized and its limitations be minimized. The following few major comments/suggestions are presented with this objective in mind.

1. It has proved over the last 6 or 7 years that the management has to struggle hard for institution's survival and growth. This evidently calls for planned organizational changes. The management is realizing that the motive of service to the society should prevail upon the profiteering one in the self as well as public interest.
2. The society should develop an attitude that nothing to be accepted free of cost. Otherwise, it amounts to deceiving oneself on long-term basis for short-range gains. The cost of education can be easily borne either in cash or kind, or by offering services to institution.
3. The beneficiaries, like industry, traders, local bodies, etc., should adopt such institutions, and a part of education-cost suitably be reimbursed by them.
4. The students admitted in technical institutions certainly have an assured future in comparison with their counterpart coming from the general education stream. The poor students can be admitted free but they should pay back the cost later on in a stipulated period of, say, 10 years.
5. These institutions should be autonomous and they should build their own credit in market.
6. The institutions should go for networking. In a region (a unit of, say, four districts), some institutions can go for specialization in certain areas, and such facilities can be utilized group-wise in a region. This will not only save the scarce resources of the country but also permit the growth of the institutions in certain areas. For example, an institution in a region shall develop a few laboratories, say, in Mechanical Engineering Sciences, and all the students in the region shall visit

this institution for successfully completing their study programme. The student's transportation shall be almost cost-free if one considers saving in (equipment and other assets) investment, and higher utilization of both modern physical facilities and qualified faculty.

7. The abundant facilities and assets created and developed by these private institutions over a short spell of hardly a decade or so is indeed a positive side of the issue. These institutions can certainly play a vital role in promoting the technical education in India, and can develop trained technical manpower so badly needed in the country for its survival in international market. It is too hasty to argue that because of a large number of such private institutions, the norms and standards of education have been diluted, and that technical education being imparted has turned to be of substandard quality. It is quite possible that if a management is sincere, it can turn very good engineers through its close monitoring over a span of four years with the stuff it has got. The fact that a sizable number of students coming from private institutions have obtained GATE score and have secured ranks in the university examinations reflects management's efforts put in for promoting technical education in India.
8. Nevertheless, certain control need to be exercised over the uncontrolled expansion of private education in India. This can be achieved on three tier levels. Regional (a unit of maximum four districts), state and central advisory councils can suitably be instituted. The government control over these bodies should be minimal, and the bodies should constitute a suitable combination of experts coming from different walks of life. These bodies shall assist AICTE in formulating and implementing the national educational policies.

9. A common platform need to be created where Government, eminent personalities, institutions and industries will come together for optimizing the gains of liberalization of technical education.

10. Private institutions must be economically viable and financially well self-supported. Some major proposals in this respect are:

a. Table 1 presents the slabs for tuition fees and repayment mode.

Table 1 : Slabs for Tuition fees and the Mode of Repayment.

Slab	Income Group Range (Rs. per year)	Fees to be charged (Rs. per year)	Repayment sum (Rs)	Mode of Repayment
1.	Less than or equal Rs. 50,000.	As charged in Govt. colleges.	4 times the fees paid plus 10% interest	5 equal annual installments.
2.	More than Rs. 50,000 & less than or equal to Rs. 1,00,000	2 times as charged in Govt. colleges.	1.5 times fees paid plus 10% interest.	As above
3.	More than Rs. 1,00,000.	5 times as charged in Govt. colleges.	-	-
4.	Backward and Economically Backward class students	nil	5 times fees charged in Government colleges plus 10% interest.	10 equal annual installments.

- b) Donations can be accepted from those parents who fall in an income group more than Rs. 1.5 lacs per annum. Such donations shall be exempted from income tax.
- c) The beneficiaries, such as, local bodies and industries should pay, say, 0.05 % of their revenues to the institutions located in the area.
- d) The private agencies should promote fund generating activities, such as, consultancy cell, production unit, evening short term courses, etc.
- e) The concept of networking of institutions in a state, and that of productivity with quality can help reduce to a large extent the financial burden on institutions.
- f) Financial institutions and banks should generously come forward for grant of loans with reasonable interest rates to both students and management.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This paper has presented the objectives of Technical and Management Education in India. It has also presented the state-of-the-art in the matter and pointed out that for country's survival in the international market, privatization (one step towards liberalization) of Technical and Management Education in India is a call of the day. Private agencies have created and developed abundant facilities which can gainfully be utilized for promoting the national prosperity. It is proposed that through change in attitude of public as well as management, the private agencies can serve the nation excellently. A few suggestions/comments have also been presented for effective functioning of private institutions.

REFERENCES

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- [3] Waghodekar, P.H., 1993, "Students' Performance Evaluation Systems : A Comparative Study" Journal of Engineering Education, Jan 1993.
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LEND THY EAR

1) JULY 1993 ISSUE

We are glad to announce that our July 93 issue would be a special issue to commemorate the completion of a decade of "No-Grant" Engineering Colleges & Polytechnics in Maharashtra. We have separately approached such colleges and polytechnics to provide factual information which on consolidation will give a clear picture of the progress made by these institutions. However articles are invited to highlight any of the aspects regarding such institutions so as to reach the editor before 10th June 1993.

2) NEW FEATURES.

We propose to add two new features in the Journal from July 93 issue.

i) A STEP AHEAD :

Under this feature a note on any innovative attempt by an individual or institution which leads to improvement in the quality of education will be published under the name of the Individual or the Institution. The individual or the institution should send a well documented note, bringing out the salient features of the note and the observed or expected results from such innovation.

The note should not be generally more than 300 words.

ii) MY DEAR STUDENT :

Student is the most important component in an educational system. This new feature is exclusively for the benefit of students dealing with a variety of subjects "concerning students in general and engineering students in particular.

3) INCREASE IN THE RATE OF SUBSCRIPTION

Dear Subscriber,

The annual subscription of Engineering Education" from this year (1993 -94) will be Rs.400/- per annum. Even though the input costs were increasing by leaps and bounds, we have endeavoured so far, not to increase the subscription. But we have no other alternative left. We are sure that you will bear with us and will continue to extend your co-operation, and active support as before. We on our part, assure you that we will always strive to serve Technical Education in general and you in particular to the best of our ability.