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NEW EDUCATION POLICY 2020: JACK OF ALL TRADES BUT MASTER OF WHAT?

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ABSTRACT

Economic development is a complex process in which financial and human capital are combined in sophisticated and productive ways, and that is why certain countries advance in this process much more rapidly than others. Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of economic development. Therefore, it is urgently required to provide quality education to the student community at the cheapest possible cost. West Bengal as a state had occupied a place of pride in the educational sphere in India. The key towards such success was its maintenance of quality in imparting knowledge among its students. At one point of time West Bengal participated in the rat race and started reducing burden of the students so that they can score well in the examination. There is no reason to deny that development of Information and communication Technology has enhanced the accessibility of both teacher and learner to expanded horizon of inputs. But the question is whether such enriched support system is sufficient to ensure provision of quality education to the learners. The essential prerequisite for successful impart of quality education is assimilation of knowledge on the part of teacher and transmission of assimilated knowledge to the learners. If we analyse the entire education system, we find a Pyramidal structure with three tiers. At the bottom there lies educational institutions and at the top there is Government. The first National Policy on Education in 1968, National Policy on Education in 1986 & its modification in 1992 and New Education Policy 2020 are instrumental to achieve those objectives of the Government of India. Present New Education Policy 2020 has envisaged flexible multidisciplinary approach to higher education putting an emphasis to research orientation. This present paper seeks to analyse whether New Education Policy will be able to reach its goal or simply produce Jack of All Trades but Master of None.

INTRODUCTION

Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of economic development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. In fact, Economic development is a complex process in which financial and human capital are combined in sophisticated and productive ways, and that is why certain countries advance in this process much more rapidly than others. So the human capital and physical capital are both required for economic development and that each has a positive external effect on the productivity of the other. From the point of view of Economics teachers may be considered as suppliers of inputs and employer may be supposed to be suppliers of output in the form of service. Hence employer's objective should be to maximize net return. Here output is quality education provided to the student community and it is not quantifiable, where as costs involved in providing such quality education is quantifiable. Thus net return is measured in terms of extent of quality education provided at the cheapest possible cost. Usual maximization exercise cannot be carried out here, as both of the benefits and cost are not measured in same unit.

The most appropriate economic tool that can be exploited to analyse the situation is costbenefit analysis and therefore the optimal situation requires attainment of greatest possible benefit at cheapest possible cost. Coming to the case of operational part only feasibility open to the employer is to ensure minimal wastage and therefore salary must be dependent on the extent of quality education provided to the student community. Process by which quality education can be imparted is to cultivate professionalism in teaching. Obviously, professionalism refers to dedication towards profession. With this background in mind let us now take up the case of Indian Education System and analyse its evolution and contribution.

Indian Education System: The Higher Education sector of India is the third largest in the world in terms of number of students. The higher education refers to the study in colleges, universities and research centres. After the completion of class 12th or intermediate course a student generally goes for higher study. The country has about 380 universities and deemed universities, over 17,500 colleges and hundreds of national and regional research institutes.

The institutes for higher learning in India follow specific rules as made by the state or the central government. There are also some statutory and autonomous bodies running in the country to regulate the higher education system in the country. The initial period of the higher education starts from the undergraduate level. After completion of intermediate level (i.e.10+2 or class 12th) in any stream a student is eligible to pursue higher education. The duration of study is either three years or four years or even five years in case of Medical Science or Architecture etc. The Engineering degree is of four years duration and all other degree courses in Arts, Commerce and Basic Sciences are of three years duration. After successful completion of the course a student is awarded a degree by the college or by the university with which the college is affiliated. There are more than 16,000 colleges in India. These colleges are affiliated to different universities of their state. The pattern of examination varies from one university to the other. Some holds annual examination while other conducts semesters. The total marks also differ from one university to the other. Some universities have started the "grading system" for awarding degrees. The syllabus for a particular course is designed by the affiliating university and it is in a state of modification from time to time. The colleges of India follow the reservation policy as mandated by the Government. There is provision of reservation of seats in colleges for special categories like Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Castes (OBCs), Physically Challenged, Sports Personalities and other categories as classified by the reservation act. As per the opinion of the Education Commission of India, popularly known as Kothari Commission (1966), secondary education should aim at preparing students for the university.

Hence the necessity of linking secondary education with the university education had been felt and a uniform system of education all over India had been advocated. West Bengal as a state had occupied a place of pride in the educational sphere in India. The key towards such success was its maintenance of quality in imparting knowledge among its students, By virtue of maintaining quality it had to face severe criticism in respect of its evaluation standard. Antagonism started spreading its wings for bringing parity in evaluation standard with other Boards/ universities outside West Bengal. Consequently, West Bengal participated in the rat race and started reducing burden of the students so that they can score well in the examination. It decided to hold Madhyamik and Higher Secondary examinations with the syllabus of terminal year alone. By analogous reasoning some universities also reduced burden by incorporating Semester system. Presently introduction of Semester System with Choice Based Credit has been made mandatory on the part of universities both in Graduation and Post-Graduation programmes. Whatever arguments are put forward in favour of Semester System, a sign of lessening students' burden is quite evident. Introduction of MCQ type test in selection of school and college teachers is also symptomatic to the concomitant changes. Already some universities have incorporated Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) and the rest of them are going to introduce the same. In this present competitive environment, there is nothing wrong to be a part in the rat race. But it should never be at the cost of imparting quality education. It should be kept in mind that score is not the ultimate destination of a learner. Ultimate destination is to acquire knowledge that will help reconstructing experiences in a lifelong process. To put much emphasis on score and to achieve higher and higher score

through lessening of burden of the learners in such a piece meal fashion is nothing but digging one's own grave. It will be students who will suffer nobody else.

Quality Education and present scenario: Quality in higher education has become a grave concern at the present moment. Quality is a big term. First of all, we have to define quality. Then we have to proceed for achieving such quality. So, we must have some clearly pre-defined objectives. Basically, quality is measured by contribution of the learner after completion of learning. Now in order to measure a learner's contribution we may identify some specific fields where a learner uses to contribute. These fields may be job market, family life, locality, society or country. The main key of achieving quality in higher education is to pay attention to the contribution to be made by a learner. In this line of thinking the present-day educationists in our country are keen on propagating some innovative steps, which they claim to be instrumental to ensure quality in higher education. Technology has played an important role in entire teaching-learning process. To be more specific Information and Communication Technology has made an effective contribution in the field of education. Now let us take up this issue and analyse in details what contribution this advancement of technology has made in teaching learning process. There is no reason to deny that development of Information and communication Technology has enhanced the accessibility of both teacher and learner to expanded horizon of inputs. But the question is whether such enriched support system is sufficient to ensure provision of quality education to the learners.

Technology plays a crucial role in enriching and expanding input vector and this qualitative aspect of technology deserves particular mention and attention while we are going to analyse the revolutionary change that has been brought about with the advent of Information and Communication technology. There is no reason to deny that development of Information and communication Technology has enhanced the accessibility of both teacher and learner to expanded horizon of inputs. But the question is whether such enriched support system is sufficient to ensure provision of quality education to the learners. The essential prerequisite for successful impart of quality education is assimilation of knowledge on the part of teacher and transmission of assimilated knowledge to the learners. In the process of transmission judicious use of technology can ease the process and stimulate the learners' Apperceptive Mass to understand grasp the matter he is going to learn and at last there occurs assimilation of knowledge on the part of learners. Technology is to substantiate transmission process, not to act as controller of the transmission process and not to act as a means of hiding lack of assimilation of knowledge on the part of teacher. When Teachers are overwhelmed with the use of Information and communication Technology, either there emerges a lack in assimilation of knowledge or assimilated knowledge has been imparted without proper involvement on the part of teachers. As a result, lack in assimilation of knowledge on the part of learners has become an obvious outcome in a considerable number of cases. More alarmingly such practice is continuing over a number of years. This can be identified as a case of slow poisoning in the process of transmission of knowledge and it results in a rift that needs to be taken care of. Only sincere dedication and devotion to teaching can bring about success provided they are supported by the peripheral commitment to achieve quality education.

Obviously, the peripheral commitment must come from the top two tiers of the pyramid. Present day education policy lacks commitment and is full of ornamental suggestions. These suggestions are simply to divert attention from the core of the problem. There are so many people who are of very positive attitude on those suggestions. But very humbly I beg to differ with them in most of the cases as my understanding of the problem follows an inwardly different stream. What to do? I can't change my observations and feelings. In order to ensure quality in education the measures, which are really able to bring quality, are to be suggested and implemented. Hollow advices and so to say big words are bound to bring education devoid of quality

CONCLUSION

If we analyse the entire education system, we find a Pyramidal structure with three tiers. At the bottom there lies educational institutions and at the top there is Government. In between these two tiers there are various bodies to take decisions on educational policy making. If we keep a sharp look at the functioning of these three tiers, we note that Government determines a clear-cut objective of education. Keeping parity with that stated objective the second tier, that is, various bodies, formulates the courses of actions to be followed by the third tier. It is then obvious that the third tier has nothing to do with the formulation of courses of actions. The members of the third tier are blind followers of those stated courses of actions. They are simply the puppets in the hands of the members of the second tier. The first National Policy on Education in 1968, National Policy on Education in 1986 & its modification in 1992 and New Education Policy 2020 are instrumental to achieve those objectives of the Government of India. Present New Education Policy 2020 has envisaged flexible multidisciplinary approach to higher education putting an emphasis to research orientation. With this objective New Education Policy 2020 has clearly set up eligibility criteria for pursuing research-oriented Honours course. One may expect such a step to be an effective attempt to maintain quality in higher education in general and in research in particular. But mere score is not sufficient to ensure quality. The ways in which the score is achieved and depth of knowledge acquired in the relevant subject are much more important to ensure quality. Study of diverse subjects in the name of multidisciplinary approach along with near about fifty percent score being allotted to be taken from attendance and internal assessment is bound to produce Jack of all trades. Mastery over a specific subject requires in-depth study of that subject in greater details for a longer duration. There exists serious lacking in this respect in the New Education Policy 2020. So far as higher education is concerned New Education Policy not only fails to create congenial academic environment to produce mastery over a specific subject but also paves the way of paralysing Indian talents.

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